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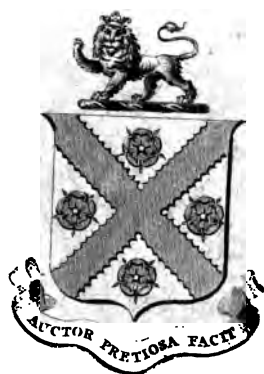
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A  
BRIEF OUTLINE  
OF THE

Evidences of Christianity.

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A  
BRIEF OUTLINE  
OF THE  
EVIDENCES  
OF THE  
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

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BY ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER, D.D.,  
*Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology, in the Theological  
Seminary of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. Am.*

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—Τί δὲ καὶ ἀπ' ἑαυτῶν οὐ κρίνεις τὸ δίκαιον ;  
Luke xii. 57.

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FROM THE THIRD AMERICAN EDITION.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE "BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE EVIDENCES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, BY THE REV. DR. ALEXANDER," has gone through three Editions within one year, in the United States.

The merits of this little work may be inferred from the fact, of its having been, soon after the first publication, introduced as a Class Book in many of the private and public Schools of that country among which may be mentioned, the Theological Seminary at Princeton, in New Jersey; Nassau Hall College; Yale College; Nashwill College; &c. &c.; besides which it obtained a rapid circulation among many Christian families of various denominations.

The publisher, therefore, entertains little doubt that its republication will be received with equal favour by the Christian public generally on this side of the Atlantic; and feels confident, that this small volume will be found a valuable addition to the many popular treatises already extant on the same subject, *especially calculated to be put into the hands of Young persons of either sex, for their instruction and improvement.*

*June, 1830.*





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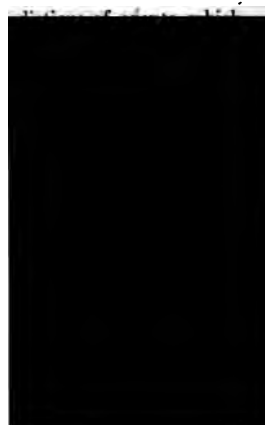
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## INTRODUCTION.

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### THE RIGHT USE OF REASON IN RELIGION.

THAT it is the right and the duty of all men to exercise their reason in inquiries concerning religion, is a truth so manifest, that it may be presumed there are none who will be disposed to call it in question.

Without reason there can be no religion : for in every step which we take, in examining the evidences of revelation, in interpreting its meaning, or in assenting to its doctrines, the exercise of this faculty is indispensable.

When the evidences of Christianity are exhibited, an appeal is made to the reason of men for its truth ; but all evidence and all argument would be perfectly futile, if reason were not permitted to judge of their force. This noble faculty was certainly given to man to be a guide in religion, as well as in other things. He possesses no other means by which he can form a judgment on any subject, or assent to any truth ; and it would be no more absurd to talk of seeing without eyes, than of knowing any thing without reason.

*It is, therefore, a great mistake to suppose that religion forbids or discourages the right use of reason.*

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comprehensible. Every new truth must be different from all that is already known ; and all the plans and works of God are very far above and beyond the conception of such minds as ours. Natural Religion has as great mysteries as any in revelation : and the created universe, as it exists, is as different from any plan which men would have conceived, as any of the truths contained in a revelation can be. But it is reasonable to believe, what by our senses we perceive to exist ; and it is reasonable to believe whatever God declares to be true.

In receiving, therefore, the most mysterious doctrines of revelation, the ultimate appeal is to reason. Not to determine whether she could have discovered these truths ; not to declare, whether, considered in themselves, they appear probable : but to decide, whether it is not more reasonable to believe what God speaks, than to confide in our own crude and feeble conceptions. Just as if an unlearned man should hear an able astronomer declare, that the diurnal motion of the heavens is not real but only apparent, or that the sun is nearer to the earth in winter than in summer ; although the facts asserted, appeared to contradict his senses, yet it would be reasonable to acquiesce in the declarations made to him by one who understood the subject, and in whose veracity he had confidence. If, then, we receive the witness of men in matters above our comprehension, much more should we receive the witness of God, who knows all things, and cannot deceive his creatures by false declarations.

There is no just cause for apprehending that we shall be misled by the proper exercise of reason on any subject which may be proposed for our consideration. The only danger is, of making an improper use of this faculty, which is one of the most common

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eagerness to all that can be said against revelation. They read with avidity the books written against Christianity, and but too faithfully treasure up every objection to religion ; but her advocates, never obtain from them a fair hearing. They never inquire, whether the arguments and objections which appear to them so strong have not been refuted. With the means of conviction within their reach, they remain firmly fixed in their infidelity ; and as long as they pursue this partial method of investigation, they must ever remain in the same darkness.

A third class, who wish to be considered as taking reason for their guide, are under the dominion of vicious passions ; of ambition, avarice, lust, or revenge. Men of this character, however strong their intellect, or extensive their erudition, can never reason impartially on any subject which interferes with the gratification of their predominant desires ; and as religion forbids, under severe penalties, all irregular passions and vicious indulgences, they pursue it with malignant hatred. As one well observes, "they are against religion, because religion is against them." Such men never reason calmly on the subject, and they are incapable of receiving any benefit from the arguments of others. They never think of religion but with a feeling of enmity, and they never speak of it but in the language of sneer or abuse. There is no object which this race of infidels have more at heart, than to root up every principle of religion from the minds of men, and to drive it from the earth, so that not one vestige of it might remain to give them torment. Voltaire may be considered as the leader of this band ; and his humble imitators have been too numerous in every Christian country.

But there is still another class of men, more dis-

ingnished as masters of reason than those who have been mentioned. They are the cold, speculative, subtle sect of sceptics, who involve themselves in a thick mist of metaphysics; attack first principles, and confound their readers with paradoxes. The number of those who belong to this class is, perhaps, not large, but they are formidable: for while the other enemies of the truth scarcely make a show of reason, these philosophers are experienced in all the intricacies of refined logic; so that in their hands, error is made to appear in the guise of truth. Should we yield ourselves to the sophistry of these men, they will persuade us to doubt, not only of the truth of revelation, but of our senses, and of our very existence. If it be inquired, how they contrive to spread such a colouring of scepticism over every subject, the answer is, by artfully assuming false principles as the premises of their reasoning; by reasoning sophistically on correct principles: by the dexterous

far into the labyrinth of their errors, that they are never able to extricate themselves ; and all their fair prospects of virtue and usefulness are obscured for ever.

Before I leave the consideration of the various classes of persons, who, while they profess to be guided by reason, make an improper use of this faculty, I ought to mention a set of men, distinguished for their learning and ingenuity, who profess to receive the Christian revelation, and glory in the appellation of rational Christians. They proceed on the plausible and (if rightly understood) correct principle, of receiving nothing as true but what their reason approves ; but these very men, with all their fair appearances of rationality, are chargeable with as gross a dereliction of reason, as can well be conceived ; and in regard to consistency, are more vulnerable than any of those already mentioned. For, while they admit that God has made a revelation, they insist upon the right of bringing the truths revealed to the test of human judgment and opinion, and reject them as unreasonable if they do not accord with this standard. But the declaration of God is the highest reason which we can have for believing any thing. To set up our opinion against the plain expression of his will, is surely presumption of the highest kind. Perhaps, however, I do not represent the case with perfect accuracy. Perhaps, no man is chargeable with such an inconsistency, as to admit a thing to be contained in an undoubted revelation, and yet reject it.

The exact state of the matter is this. The Scriptures, it is admitted, contain a revelation from God ; but there are many things in the Bible, which, if taken in the most obvious sense, are inconsistent with reason ; now, as nothing inconsistent with reason can



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tians, the divine system of heavenly text


thing can be demonstrated. The reasonings by which it has been attempted to prove, that the doctrines, commonly called orthodox, are contrary to reason, are fallacious ; and a similar mode of reasoning, on the truths of natural religion, will land us in atheism.

Deistical writers have been fond of representing faith and reason as irreconcilable. They have insinuated, and even asserted, that revelation cannot be received without a renunciation of reason ; and have affected to regret, that it should be subjected to the trial of a rational investigation, which they allege it can by no means bear. This was a favourite topic with Morgan, Bolingbroke, Voltaire, and Hume. The last mentioned author, in the close of his far famed Essay on Miracles, uses the following language ; " Our most holy religion is founded on Faith, not on reason, and it is a sure method of exposing it, to put it to a test, which it is by no means fitted to endure."—And again ; " Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its [the Christian Religion's] veracity, and whoever is moved by faith to assent to it, is conscious of a continual miracle, in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding."

On the insidious nature of this attack, I shall not stop to remark, except to observe, that it may be taken as a specimen, not only of Hume's method of treating Christianity, but of that of the whole tribe of deistical writers, until very recently, when they have come out boldly. Under the mask of friendship, and with words of respectfulness on their lips, they have aimed the most deadly thrusts at the vitals of Christianity. But in regard to the sentiment expressed in this extract, the friends of revelation utterly disclaim it, and hold it to be false and un-

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and a sceptic. But we shall  
, in the sequel, to consider the  
asonings against miracles.





## CHAPTER I.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO BANISH ALL RELIGION FROM THE WORLD; AND IF IT WERE POSSIBLE, IT WOULD BE THE GREATEST CALAMITY WHICH COULD BEFALL THE HUMAN RACE.

It is not my object here to consider religion as it is a matter of duty, or a means of obtaining happiness in a future world; for both these would be equally disregarded by those men who aim at the subversion of all religion. What I shall attempt, at present, is to state and establish the fact, that man is so constituted, that he must have some sort of religion.

And the truth of this will be manifest, from an inspection of the principles of human nature, and from the history of the world. Man has naturally a sense of moral obligation, a perception of the difference between right and wrong, feelings of remorse or approbation on the review of his conduct, fears of future retribution when he has committed a crime, and a propensity to pay religious homage to some object, visible or invisible. These are what have been called his *religious feelings*; and from them he has received the appellation of a *religious animal*. And certainly, there is nothing by which man is so clearly distinguished from the creatures below him, as this capacity for religion; for whatever indications they give of sagacity in other matters, it is impossible to communicate to them any ideas of morality, or any impressions of a religious nature. Now,

It would be as difficult to find a nation without religion, as to find one without speech. Some travellers, it is true, from observation, have reported that some savages had no ideas of religion, and no species of worship. On more accurate examination, it has been found, that this was a mistake. And from the knowledge of the nations of the earth, we are authorized to assert, that there is not one tribe without some sense of religion, and some species of worship. The same thing was well known to the wisest men of antiquity. It is a fact, that both Plato and Cicero have derived many important conclusions. And these principles of religion are so deeply radicated, that they never can be removed. Men may be induced to abandon their religion, and to adopt a new one; but they can never remain long free from all religion. They will soon find a new object of worship, and they will soon attach themselves to another. If unhappily they lose sight of the true God, they will set up their own inventions.



Atheistical men have, indeed, attempted to trace all religious feelings, and all rites of worship, to the craft of priests, and policy of rulers; but this opinion is not only unsupported by historical testimony, but is most unreasonable in itself. For if there had not existed a predisposition to religion in the minds of men, such a design would never have been conceived; and if it had, all attempts to introduce into the minds of man ideas so foreign to his nature, must have been abortive. At any rate, such an imposition could not have continued for so long a time, and could not have been extended to every tribe and nation in the world. If no sense of religion had existed in the minds of men, priests and politicians, however cunning, would have had no handle to take hold of, no foundation on which to build. Besides, it seems to be forgotten by the advocates of this hypothesis, that the existence of priests supposes the previous existence of religion.

They have, moreover, alleged, that fear produced the gods. Be it so; it still confirms my position, that there is something in the nature of man which leads him to religion; and it is reasonable to conclude, that a cause which has operated uniformly heretofore, will continue to produce the same effects as long as the world stands. It is impossible, therefore, to banish all religion from the world.

To what degree atheists have succeeded in divesting themselves of all religious impression, I do not pretend to know. That some men have gone to a great length in counteracting the constitutional tendencies, and extinguishing the feelings of nature is undoubtedly true; but there have been sufficient indications to lead to the opinion, that there is more of affectation than reality in the bravery of their profession. It is known that some of them have, above :

or, not able to erase  
pressions from their own minds, it is  
to banish all religion from the world.

But suppose the great work achieved, every vestige of religion was obliterated, what would be the result? Would men remain without subjects of religious homage? Would they be afraid of invisible powers? Would they, of remorse at no time urge them to some sort of penance, or attempt some kind of atonement? Would no impostors and false prophets deceive the world again with their dream of pretended revelations? They must have some superficial observations on human nature, that none of these things would ever occur.

If those persons, therefore, who oppose religion, by its subversion, to get rid of it, they do greatly deceive themselves. Their task being accomplished, they would soon have no form in endless progression. Instead of a mild, benignant religion of Christ, they find themselves surrounded by

great would soon grow up among us, were it not for the salutary influence of Christianity. Our forefathers, before they became Christians, were in the same degraded and wretched situation. And shall we curse our posterity by bringing back those evils from which our fathers escaped? It is a truth which should be proclaimed every where on the house tops, that it is the BIBLE which has delivered us from the horrid dominion of superstition; and it is the BIBLE which must prevent its return. Philosophy has had no hand in working out this deliverance from the horrors of idolatry. With all her celebrated schools and sages, she never turned one individual from the worship of idols; and she would be equally powerless in preventing the return of superstition, if other barriers were removed.

But I proceed now to the second part of my proposition, which is, that if religion could be banished from the world, it would be the greatest calamity which could befall the human race.

It has formerly been a matter of discussion with the learned, whether the influence of superstition or atheism was most baleful on society. Plutarch, Bacon, Bayle, Warburton, and others, have handled this subject in a learned and ingenious manner, and arrived at very different conclusions. However doubtful this question may have been considered in former times, I believe all reflecting men are now pretty well satisfied, that the question is put to rest for ever. We have recently beheld the spectacle of a great nation casting off contemptuously the religion of their fathers, and plunging at once into the abyss of atheism. We have seen the experiment tried, to ascertain whether a populous nation could exist without the restraints of religion. Every circumstance was as



been more complete —  
was the result? It is written in characters of blood.  
It was as if a volcano had burst upon the world,  
disgorged its fiery flood over all Europe  
of cruelty, cold-blooded malignity, be-  
heaven-daring impiety, and insatiable  
the world never witnessed before, and,  
will never witness again. The only  
which brightened the dismal prospect,  
horrible system contained in itself the seeds  
its own speedy downfall. Atheism  
of union for its professors; no basis of  
fidence. It breeds suspicion, and conspires  
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views his fellows in the same light,  
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miscrants the instruments of vengeance upon each other. The general state of morals, in France, during the period in which Christianity was proscribed, and atheism reigned, was such as almost exceeds belief. An eye-witness of the whole scene, and an actor in some parts of it, has drawn the following sketch: "Multiplied cases of suicide, prisons crowded with innocent persons, permanent guillotines, perjuries of all classes, parental authority set at naught, debauchery encouraged by an allowance to those called unmarried mothers; nearly six thousand divorces within the single city of Paris, within a little more than two years after the law authorized them; in a word, whatever is most obscene in vice, and most dreadful in ferocity!"\* If these be the genuine fruits of atheism, then let us rather have superstition in its most appalling form. Between atheism and superstition there is this great difference; the latter may authorize some crimes, the former opens the flood-gates to all. The one restrains partially, the other removes all restraint from vice. Every kind of religion presents some terrors to evil doers; atheism promises complete immunity, and stamps virtue itself with the character of folly.

But we must not suppose that the whole mass of the French people became atheists, during this period. Far from it. A large majority viewed the whole scene with horror and detestation; but the atheistical philosophers had got the power in their hands; and, though a small minority of the nation, were able to effect so much mischief. But from this example we may conjecture, what would be the state of things, if the whole mass of people in a nation

\* Gregoire.

presence of all restraint and all hope, a  
trolled dominion of the most malign  
But there would be one remarkable  
rence ; for while atheists deny the  
them, the inhabitants of hell BELIEVE .



## CHAPTER II.

**IF CHRISTIANITY BE REJECTED, THERE IS NO OTHER RELIGION WHICH CAN BE SUBSTITUTED IN ITS PLACE ; AT LEAST, NO OTHER WHICH WILL AT ALL ANSWER THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH RELIGION IS DESIRABLE.**

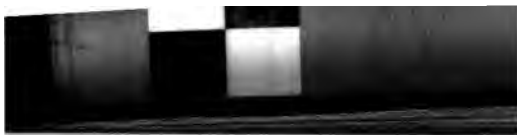
It has been proved in the former section, that it is necessary to have some religion. We are already in possession of Christianity, which, by the confession of deists themselves, answers many valuable purposes. It behoves us, therefore, to consider well what we are likely to obtain by the exchange, if we should relinquish it. If any man can show us a better religion, and founded on better evidences, we ought, in that event, to give it up willingly ; but if this cannot be done, then surely it is not reasonable to part with a certain good, without receiving an equivalent in its place. This would be, as if some persons sailing on the ocean, in a vessel which carried them prosperously, should determine to abandon it, without knowing that there was any other to receive them, merely because some of the passengers, pretending to skill, suggested that it was leaky, and would sooner or later founder.

Let the enemies of Christianity tell us plainly what their aim is, and what they design to substitute in the place of the Bible. This, however, they are *unable to perform* ; and yet they would have us to *consent to give up* our dearest hopes without knowin

claims, that we may know whether to answer the purposes for which ed. To bring this subject fairly i take a survey of the world, and inqu propose for our selection, if we Christianity:

There are only three things, in twcen which we must choose. Th some of the exploded systems of second, to accept the Koran instead the third to embrace Natural Religi

Few men have had the effrontery turn to Paganism : yet even this extravagant for some whose name men of literature. The learned that I recollect, expressed his opinion explicitly; but it may be fairly in things in his History of the Declir



is difficult to tell what he wished to accomplish by his opposition to Christianity ; or whether he had any definite view, other than to manifest his hatred to the Gospel and its Author.

Taylor, the learned translator of Plato, openly avowed his predilection for the religion of the Athenian philosopher, and his wish that it might be revived ; and speaks in contemptuous terms of Christianity, in comparison with Platonism ; but he never could have supposed that to be a suitable religion for the bulk of men, which had not the least influence upon them, while the philosopher lived. This, then, would be no substitute for Christianity ; for under its benign influence, even **THE POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED UNTO THEM.** But I have no doubt, that if the truth could be ascertained, we should find that this sublime genius derived some of his best ideas, directly or indirectly, from the Scriptures ; and that if he had lived under the light of the Gospel, he never would have spoken of it as his translator has done.

In the time of the revolution in France, after some trial had been made of having no religion, D'Aubermenil proposed a new religion, in imitation of the ancient Persians. His plan was to have the Deity represented by a perpetual fire, and offerings made to him of fruits, oil, and salt, and libations poured out to the four elements. It was prescribed, that worship should be celebrated daily in the temple, that every ninth day should be a sabbath, and that on certain festivals all ages should unite in dances. A few fanatics in Paris, and elsewhere, actually adopted the new religion ; but they were unable to attract any notice, and in a little time sunk into merited oblivion.

*It has been common enough to set up the M*

BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE

medan religion, in a sort of rival comparison with Christianity, but I do not know that any have gone so far as to prefer the Koran to the Bible; except those few miserable apostates, who, after being "tossed about with every wind of doctrine," at length threw themselves into the arms of the Arabian impostor. How far this religion will bear a comparison with Christianity, will be seen in the sequel.

Deism or Natural Religion, is then, the only hope of the world, if the Christian religion be rejected. To this our attention shall now be turned. The first English deists extolled natural religion to the skies as a system which contained all that man had any need to know; and as being simple and intelligible to the meanest capacity. But strange to tell, scarce any two of them are agreed, as to what natural religion is; and the same discordance has existed among their successors. They are not agreed ever

ing to the demerit of his crime. I know, indeed, that Lord Herbert laid it down as one of the five articles of natural religion, that pardon might be obtained on repentance; and the same idea has been entertained by his followers; but this is a doctrine evidently borrowed from revelation. Natural religion, when properly understood, knows nothing of pardon. It is in direct opposition to the principle mentioned above; and if it were so, that the law of nature promised pardon to the penitent, without satisfaction, it would have no sanction whatever; for if men can repent when they please, (which must be supposed,) then they may sin as much as they please, without fear of punishment. The case is far otherwise with the forgiveness of the Gospel.

As this religion teaches no plan of atonement and forgiveness, so it inculcates no effectual method of reformation, or purification from the pollution of sin, and affords no aid to those who wish to live well, but leaves all to be performed by the mere strength of men, which, alas! is insufficient to bear up against the power of temptation. In those very points on which we want a clear response, natural religion is silent. It can do no more, when its light is clearest, than to direct us in the way of duty, and intimate the consequences of disobedience. Deists, then, must lead such lives of perfection, as to need no pardon, no regeneration, no aid, no reformation. The system is good for them, who can go through life without sin;—it sets no hope before the mourning penitent.

Again, if deism, be the true religion, why has piety never flourished among its professors? why have they not been the most zealous and consistent worshippers of God? Does not truth promote piety? and will it not ever be the case, that they who hold



...the reverse, that even asking questions, has the appearance of righteousness. When people hear the words 'pious deists', they have the same sort of feeling, as when men hear of an honest thief, or a sober drunkard.

There is no slander in making theists do not affect to be pious. They are not for devotion. If the truth were known, they would very thing they wish to get rid of. They believe, that professing themselves deists, they are under greater obligations to be pious, than they would not be so zealous for the truth. The contest is not between religion and irreligion, but between religion and irreligion. It is possible, that a man of truly pious principles, would reject the Bible, even if he were surrounded by historical evidences. He would not find it congenial to his taste, and so salutary to his own interests.

event shall occur, they will be found no longer opposing the Bible, but will esteem it the best of books, and will come to it for fuel to feed the flame of pure devotion. An African prince, who was brought to England and resided there some time, being asked, what he thought of the Bible ? answered, that he believed it to be from God, for he found all the good people in favour of it, and all the bad people against it !

The want of a spirit of piety and devotion, must be reckoned the principal reason why the deists have never been able to establish, and keep up, any religious worship among themselves. The thing has been attempted at several different times, and in different countries ; but never with any success.

It is said, that the first enterprize of this kind was that of David Williams, an Englishman, who had been a dissenting minister in Liverpool, but passing over first to Socinianism, and then to deism, went to London, where, being patronised by some persons of influence, he opened a house for deistical worship, and formed a liturgy, consisting principally of praise to the Creator. Here he preached for a short time, and collected some followers ; but he complained that most of his congregation went on to atheism. After four years trial, the scheme came to nothing. There were neither funds, nor congregation remaining, and the Priest of nature, (as Williams styled himself,) through discouragement and ill health, abandoned the project.

Some feeble attempts of the same kind have been made in the United States ; but they are unworthy of being particularly noticed.

*Frederick II*, the deistical king of Prussia, had once formed the plan of a Pantheon in Berlin, for worshippers of all sects and all religions : th

chief object of which was the subversion of anity ; but the scheme was never carried into effect.

The most interesting experiment of this kind was that made by the Theophilanthropists in France during the period of the revolution. After a trial had been made of atheism and irreligion when the want of public worship was felt among reflecting persons, a society was formed for the worship of God, by the name just mentioned, on pure principles of natural religion. Among the members of this society, were men beloved for their philanthropy, and distinguished for their learning and some high in power.

La Revelliere Lepaux, one of the directors in France, was a zealous patron of the new religion. By his influence, permission was obtained to use the churches for their worship. In the city of Paris, twenty were assigned to the worship of Notre Dame.



we were made to have this worship generally introduced, in all the principal towns in France ; and the efforts of the society were even extended to foreign countries. Their manual was sent into all parts of the empire, by the minister of the interior, free of ex-

cess. Never did a society enjoy greater advantages at its commencement. Christianity had been rejected with contempt ; atheism had for a short time been tried, but was found to be intolerable ; the government was favorable to the project ; men of learning and influence patronized it, and churches ready built, were at the service of the new denomination. The system of moral religion, also, which was adopted, was the best that could have been selected, and considerable success was discovered in the construction of their lives.

But with all these circumstances in their favor, the society could not subsist. At first indeed, the scene was novel, large audiences attended ; of whom, however, were merely spectators ; but in a short time, they dwindled away to such a degree, instead of occupying twenty churches, they occupied only four in Paris : and in some of the provincial towns, where they commenced under the most favorable auspices, they soon came to nothing. Thus they went on declining until, under the consular government, they were prohibited the use of the churches any longer ; upon which they immediately withdrew without a struggle ; and it is believed that no vestige of the society now remains.

It will be instructive and interesting to inquire the reason of this want of success, in a society enjoying so many advantages. Undoubtedly the chief reason was, the want of a truly devotional spirit. This was observed from the beginning of their meet-

... were good, but we  
hired from the stage. There was also  
a defect of liberality in contributing to the  
society. They found it impossible to  
of their societies, a sum which every as-  
gregation, even the poorest of any se-  
collected in one day. It is a fact, that  
societies petitioned government to get  
from a debt, which they had contracted  
ing the apparatus of their worship, to  
to more than fifty dollars, stating that their  
come did not exceed twenty dollars.  
towns, their musicians deserted them  
were not paid, and frequently no person  
found to deliver lectures.

Another difficulty arose which might  
foreseen. Some of the societies declared  
*independent*; and would not agree to buy  
the manual which had been received from



by those, who had made greater advances in the modern philosophy, for their illiberality. It was complained, that there were many who could not receive their creed, and all such must necessarily be excluded from their society. This censure seems to have troubled them much ; and in order to wipe off the stigma, they appointed a fete, which they called the Anniversary of the re-establishment of natural religion. To prove that their liberality had no bounds, they prepared five banners to be carried in procession. On the first was inscribed the word *Religion* ; on the second *Morality* ; and on the others respectively, *Jews*, *Catholics*, *Protestants*. When the procession was over, the bearers of the several banners gave each other the kiss of peace ; and that none might mistake the extent of their liberality, the banner inscribed *Morality*, was borne by a professed atheist, universally known as such in Paris. They had also other festivals peculiar to themselves ; and four in honour of the following persons, Socrates, St. Vincent de Paule, J. J. Rousseau, and Washington ; a strange conjunction of names truly !\*

I have been thus particular in giving an account of this society, because the facts furnish the strongest confirmation of my argument, and are in themselves curious and instructive. After the failure of this enterprise, deists will scarcely attempt again to institute any form of public worship.

But among those philosophers, who believe in the perfectibility of human nature, under the fostering influence of increasing knowledge and good govern-

\* *Histoire de Theophilanthropie* par M. Gregoire.—See Quarterly Review for January, 1823.

ment, there is a vague theory, of a kind of mental philosophical religion, which needs the aid of no external forms. The primary articles of their creeds, that religion is a thing entirely between God and every man's conscience; that all that our Creator requires is, the homage of the heart; that if we feel reverence, gratitude, and submission towards him, and act our part well in society, we have fulfilled our duty; that we cannot know how we may be disposed of hereafter, and ought not to be anxious about it. Whether this is expected to be the religion of philosophers only, or also of the unlearned and the great mass of labouring people, I am unable to say. But I know such a system as this, will do a large majority of every community, be equivalent to no religion at all. The great body of the people must have something tangible, something visible, in their religion. They need the aid of the senses, and of the social principle, to fix the



consists essentially in the exercise of the heart ; but that religion which is merely mental, is suspicious ; at best, very feeble ; is not likely to produce any permanent effect on the character or comfort of the person entertaining it ; and cannot be useful to others in the way of example.

In the year 1802, when Christianity, which had been proscribed in France, was restored by an act of government, a speech was delivered by one of the counsellors of state, which contains excellent sentiments on the subject here treated. One or two extracts will not be unacceptable to the reader. "Science can never be partaken of, but by a small number, but by religion one may be instructed without being learned. The natural religion, to which one may rise by the effects of a cultivated reason, is merely abstract and intellectual, and unfit for any people. It is revealed religion which points out all the truths that are useful to men who have neither time nor means for laborious disquisitions. Who then would wish to dry up that sacred spring of knowledge, which diffuses good maxims, brings them before the eyes of every individual, and communicates to them that authoritative and popular dress, without which they would be unknown to the multitude, and almost to all men.—For want of religious education for the last ten years, our children are without any ideas of a divinity, without any notion of what is just and unjust ; hence arise barbarous manners, hence a people become ferocious. One cannot but sigh over the lot which threatens the present and future generations. Alas ! what have we gained by deviating from the path pointed out to us by our ancestors ? What have we gained by substituting vain and abstract doctrines for the creed which actuated the minds of *Turanne, Feueilon*, and *Pascal* ?"



It may also be observed, in connection with the facts which have been adduced, not only to confirm this proposition, but also to furnish arguments, in proof of the proposition, in the preceding chapter.



## CHAPTER III.

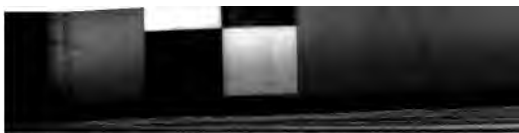
THERE IS NOTHING IMPROBABLE OR UNREASONABLE IN THE IDEA OF A REVELATION FROM GOD ; AND CONSEQUENTLY NOTHING IMPROBABLE OR UNREASONABLE IN SUCH A MANIFEST DIVINE INTERPOSITION AS MAY BE NECESSARY TO ESTABLISH A REVELATION.

THAT a revelation is possible, will not be called in question by any who believe in the existence of God ; nor can it be believed that there is any thing in the notion of a revelation, repugnant to the moral attributes of the Supreme Being. It cannot be inconsistent with the wisdom, goodness, or holiness of God, to increase the knowledge of his intelligent creatures. The whole end of a revelation is to make men wiser, better, and happier ; and what can be conceived more accordant with our ideas of divine perfection, than this ?

That man is capable of receiving benefit from a revelation, is a truth so evident, that it would be folly to spend time in demonstrating it ; for whatever may be thought of the sufficiency of natural religion, if it was fully understood and improved, yet all must admit, that men, generally, have not been sufficiently enlightened, on the subject of religion. The history of the world, in all ages, proves the deplorable ignorance of the greater part of the human race, even on those subjects which the advocates of natural religion confess to be the most important and fundamental.

#### BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE

cannot be thought an unreasonable supposition, when God made the original pair of man and woman, he should furnish them with such a stock of knowledge as was absolutely necessary, not only for their subsistence, but for their preservation. As the first pair of man and woman had no experience, and had none upon earth from which they could derive instruction, is it unreasonable to suppose, that the beneficent Creator could furnish them such a stock of knowledge as was necessary for the common purposes of life? Those who suppose, that man was at first a brute animal, very little different from the beasts, who now roam the forest; and that from this state he emerged by his own exertions; that he discovered articulate speech, and all the arts of life, without receiving any aid, or any revelation from God, is, to my apprehension, so improbable, and so opposed to all authentic history and common experience, that I cannot find abet



came still more involved in ignorance, than their parents. Now, that the righteous Governor of the universe may leave men to follow their own inventions, and suffer by their own folly, is certain; for he has done so. But is it not consistent with his wisdom and goodness to use extraordinary means to rescue them from a state so degraded and wretched? Would not every sober deist admit, that some means of bringing them back to just ideas of natural religion would be desirable? If then, the apostacy of man from his Maker should render some further revelation necessary, would it not be highly benevolent to communicate whatever his circumstances required? Why should it be thought unreasonable, that God should sometimes depart from his common mode of acting, to answer great and valuable ends? What is there in the established course of nature so sacred, or so immutable, that it must never, on any occasion, or for any purpose, be changed? The only reason why the laws of nature are uniform, is, that this is for the benefit of man; but if his interest requires a departure from the regular course, what is there to render it unreasonable? The Author of the universe has never bound himself to pursue one undeviating course, in the government of the world. The time may come when he may think proper to change the whole system. As he gave it a beginning, he may also give it an end. General uniformity is expedient, that men may know what to expect, and may have encouragement to use means to obtain necessary ends; but occasional and unfrequent deviations from this uniformity, have no tendency to prevent the benefit arising from it. This is so evident a truth, that I am almost ashamed to dwell so long upon it; but by the sophistry of infidels a strange darkness has been

ing ; and finally, that it would be a revelation for man ; and altogether consistent with the actions of God, and the principles on which he governs the world.

Now, suppose that God should determine to reveal his will to man : how could this be conveniently effected ? We can conceive of two ways : the first by inspiring all who needed knowledge with the ideas which he wished to communicate ; the second by inspiring a few persons, and enabling them to communicate to others the truths which he first would seem the most effectual, but which are more analogous to his other dispensations. The first might have been given in perfection at once, but it is subject to the uncertainty of education and improvement ; but such is not the fact. By education, and much culture, this faculty attains its full strength, and when neglected, never acquires any degree of strength. In regard to the best mode of making a revelation, however, we are totally incompetent to judge ; but of one thing we may be certain, that if God should give a revelation to



not capable of being counterfeited ; something, by which, God should, in some way, manifest himself. And how could this be effected, but by the exertion of his power, or by the manifestation of his infinite knowledge ? That is, by miracles, or by prophecies, or by both. There is, then, just as much probability, that miracles will exist, (for prophecy may be considered one kind of miracle) as that a revelation will be given. The conjunction of these two things is reasonable ; if we find the one, we may be sure that the other exists also.

It is admitted that a revelation from God would have internal evidence of its origin, but this does not strike the attention at once. It requires time before it can be perceived ; but in the first establishment of a revelation, there is need of some evidence which is obvious to the senses, and level to the capacities of all. Just such an evidence are miracles. Moreover, internal evidence requires, in order that it may be perceived and appreciated, a certain favourable state of the moral feelings, without which it is apt to be overlooked, and produces no conviction ; whereas external evidence is not only level to every capacity, but adapted to bring home conviction to every description of men, to the bad as well as the good.

Miracles then furnish the best proof for the establishment of a revelation. They seem to be its proper seal. They are the manifest attestation of God. Nothing can be conceived which will more strikingly indicate his power and presence, than a visible suspension of the laws of nature. He is invisible, he must make himself known by his works ; and a miracle is such a work that no other can perform. When therefore a person professes to have received a revelation from God, and when we be-

...correctly,  
exert his power to confirm the pre  
postor, or to attest doctrines which

## CHAPTER IV.

MIRACLES ARE CAPABLE OF PROOF FROM  
TESTIMONY.

I DO not know that any one has denied that a miracle would be credible, if exhibited to our senses. A man might indeed be deceived by an illusion arising from some disorder in his senses ; but if he was conscious of being in a sound state of body and mind, and should witness not only one but a variety of miracles ; not only a few times but for years in succession, and if he should find that all around him had the same perceptions of these facts as himself, I need not say that it would be reasonable to credit his senses, for the constitution of his nature would leave him no choice ;—he would be under the necessity of believing what he saw with his eyes, heard with his ears, and handled with his hands. But are there facts which a man would credit on the evidence of his senses, which can by no means be rendered credible by the testimony of any number of witnesses ? Then there might be facts, the knowledge of which could never be so communicated as to be worthy of credit. According to this hypothesis, the constitution of our nature would require us to withhold our assent from what was true, and what others knew to be true. If a thousand persons of the strictest veracity should testify that they had repeatedly witnessed a miracle, and if all circumstances should concur to corroborate their testimony, yet upon this principle it would be unreasonable



...sense and universal experience testimony. The true principle on *that any fact which would be believed of the senses, may be reasonably believed*, there may be testimony of such a nature to produce conviction as strong as any other evidence; and such testimony in favour would establish it as firmly as if we had ourselves. But, notwithstanding, the position of common sense and experience, the logical argument of Mr. Hume has been perplexing and unsettling the minds of many. He boasts that "it will be useful to others as long as the world endures," it seems to enter into an examination of his argument may be able to expose its fallacy. This has been done in a convincing manner, by many eminent for their learning and discrimination; their works were read by all who properly should think it unnecessary to add a second to the subject. But it may not be without interest to present a refutation in a more popular style.

ported by any human testimony, is more properly a subject of derision than of argument. No testimony for any kind of miracle can ever possibly amount to a probability."—"We establish it as a maxim that no human testimony can have such force, as to prove a miracle and make a just foundation for any system of religion."—"Our belief or assurance of any fact from the report of eye witnesses, is derived from no other principle than experience; that is, our observation of the veracity of human testimony, and of the usual conformity of facts to the reports of witnesses. Now if the fact attested partakes of the marvellous, if it is such as has seldom fallen under our own observation: here is a contest of two opposite experiences of which the one destroys the other, as far as its force goes. Further, if the fact affirmed by the witnesses, instead of being only marvellous, is really miraculous; if, besides the testimony considered apart, and in itself, amounts to an entire proof; in that case there is proof against proof, of which the strongest must prevail.—A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle from the very nature of the fact is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. And if so, it is an undeniable consequence, that it cannot be surmounted by any proof whatever from testimony. A miracle therefore, however attested, can never be rendered credible even in the lowest degree." Here we have the substance of Mr. Hume's argument, on which I propose to make some remarks, intended to show that its whole plausibility depends on the assumption of false principles, and the artful use of equivocal terms.

jurisdiction was  
jury was done. But the simple  
of nature are nothing else than  
of divine power in the govern-  
which depend entirely, for the  
uance, on the divine will; and  
else than the exertion of the  
different from that which is com-  
mere suspension of that power  
observed to operate in the world.

2. Mr. Hume's argument will  
of the senses as well as to that de-  
and will prove (if it prove any thing)  
impossible to believe in a miracu-  
lousness it ever so often. "The  
experience," says he "which gives  
degree of assurance in the testimony  
us also in this case another degree  
the fact which they endeavour to  
contradiction there arises necessity  
and mutual destruction of belief.  
very same countenance and

says he, "there is proof against proof." Now it is evident that upon these principles the same *equilibrium* from contradictory evidence must take place, between experience and the senses. If one evidence be stronger than another, "the strongest must prevail, but with a diminution of force in proportion to that of its antagonist. But in the case of the senses, and a firm and unalterable experience, the evidence is perfect on both sides, so that the "counterpoise and mutual destruction of belief" must occur. According to this metaphysical balance of Mr. Hume, a miracle could not be believed if we witnessed it ever so often ; for although there is a great weight of evidence on each side, yet as there is an equilibrium, neither can have any influence on our assent. Whether Mr. Hume would have objected to this conclusion, does not appear ; but it is manifest that it logically follows from his argument, as much as in the case to which he has applied it. And here we see to what pitch of scepticism his reasoning leads.

3. Mr. Hume makes an unnecessary distinction between that which is marvellous, and that which is miraculous ; for although there is a real difference, yet as to his argument there is none. The force of his reasoning does not relate to events as being miraculous, but as being opposite to universal experience. If the conclusion therefore be correct, it will equally prove that no testimony is sufficient to establish a natural event, which has not before been experienced. If ever so many witnesses should aver, that they had seen meteoric stones fall from the clouds, or the galvanic fluid melt metals, yet if we have never experienced these things ourselves, we must not believe them.

4. The *opposite* or *contrary* experience of Mr.

the distinction which he artfully  
to "the king of Siam, who re  
first reports concerning the effect  
*that which is contrary* to experi  
*formable* to experience, is without  
fact cannot be contrary to expe  
way, than by being *not conform*  
neither is, nor can be, any experie  
except this, that they have not o  
experience or that of others. W  
of our author is expressed in lang  
biguity, it will amount to this, th  
been experienced, can never be be  
mony, than which nothing can be  
more false. In what a situation m  
at the beginning of the world, if h  
principles of this sceptic?

5. Mr. Hume uses the word ex  
fold sense, changing from one to  
suits his purpose. Sometimes it i  
perience, and at other times --  
the exper

perienced. Many learned men never take the trouble to witness the most curious experiments in philosophy and chemistry ; yet they are as well satisfied of their truth, as if they had personal experience of it.

But although an argument founded on an opposition between testimony and experience, in order to be of any validity, must relate to *personal* experience ; yet Mr. Hume commonly uses the term to signify the experience of all men in all ages. This extensive meaning of the term must be the one which he affixes to it in most places of his essay ; because, it is an experience by which we know that the laws of nature are uniform and unalterable ; and he has given an example which clearly determines the sense of the word ; “ that a dead man should come to life,” says he, “ has never been witnessed in any age or country.” Now, according to this use of the word, what he calls an argument, is a mere assumption of the point in dispute ; what logicians call, a *petitio principii*, a begging of the question. For what is the question in debate ? Is it not whether miracles have ever been experienced ? And how does Mr. Hume undertake to prove that they never did exist ? By an argument intended to demonstrate that no testimony can establish them ; the main principle of which argument is, that all experience is against them. If miracles have ever occurred, they are not contrary to universal experience ; for whatever has been witnessed at any time, by any person, makes part of universal experience. What sort of reasoning is it then, to form an argument against the truth of miracles founded on the assumption, that they never existed ? If it be true, as he says, “ that it has never been witnessed in any age or country that a dead man should come to life,” then, indeed it is useless to adduce testimo-

sumed, as the man  
however, as easy to deny as to affirm  
utterly deny the truth of his position ;  
all, we are at issue precisely on the point  
commenced. Nothing is proved by  
which promised so much, except the shew  
er in sophistical reasoning.

6. Our author falls into another mode  
reasoning. The object is to prove, that  
in favour of miracles can never prevail  
because it is opposed by uniform and  
experience. But how do we know what  
experience is ? Is it not by testimony  
in the narrow circle of our own persons  
Then it turns out that the testimony  
in favour of miracles is neutralized or overbalanced by  
testimony. That is, to destroy the force  
of the testimony in favour of miracles  
assumes a principle founded on testimony  
admitted that when testimony is adduced  
in favour of miracles it is stronger than



witnesses are most credible, yours or mine. Just so it is in the case of Mr. Hume's argument. He sets up uniform experience against testimony, and gives a preponderance to the former, on the ground, that witnesses are known sometimes to lie; but all that he knows of what has happened in other ages and countries, is by testimony; and they who give this testimony are as fallible as others; therefore there existed no ground for preferring the evidence of experience to testimony. Besides, he is not in possession of testimony to establish a thousandth part of what has been experienced; and as far as it goes, it amounts to no more than *non-experience*; a mere negative thing, which can never have any weight to overthrow the testimony of positive witnesses. In a court of justice, such a method of rebutting testimony, would be rejected as totally inadmissible. If we had sufficient evidence of a fact of any kind, *that* testimony would not be invalidated, if it could be proved, that no person in the world had ever witnessed the like before. This want of previous experience naturally creates a presumption against the fact, which requires some force of evidence to overcome:—but in all cases a sufficient number of witnesses of undoubted intelligence and veracity, will be able to remove the presumption and produce conviction.

7. Mr. Hume lays it down as a principle, that our belief in testimony arises from "experience, that is, observation of the veracity of human testimony." But this is not correct. Our belief in testimony is as natural, and constitutional, as our belief in our senses. Children at first believe implicitly all that is told them; and it is from experience that they *learn to distrust* testimony. If our faith in testimony *arose from experience* it would be impossible to ac-



timony, nothing  
would never arrive at the mat-  
cessary to make observations on a subje  
plicated.

But, although I perceive Mr. Hume's  
wishing to establish this false principle was  
the evidence of what he calls *experience*, al  
mony; yet I think, if we should concede  
it could answer him no purpose, since we h  
that this experience itself depends on  
Whatever use he can make of this princi  
fore, against testimony, can be turned agai  
since his knowledge of what the experi  
world is, can only be obtained by the re  
nesses, who, in different ages have observ  
of nature.

8. Mr. Hume, on reflection, seems  
convinced, that his argument was unso  
appended to his Essay on Miracle  
entirely overthrow

"Suppose," says he, "all authors in all languages agree, that from the first of January, 1600, there was a total darkness all over the earth for eight days; suppose that the tradition of this event is still strong and lively among the people; that all travellers bring us accounts of the same tradition, &c.—IT IS EVIDENT THAT OUR PHILOSOPHERS OUGHT TO RECEIVE IT FOR CERTAIN." And this is a part of the same Essay, in which it is said, "*that a miracle, supported by any human testimony, is more properly a subject of derision than argument.*" "*No kind of testimony for any kind of miracle can possibly amount to a probability, much less to a proof.*"

It might appear, that after so complete a renunciation of the principle which at first he so strenuously asserted, we might have spared ourselves the pains of a formal refutation. But not so. The author is resolved that his concession shall be of no service whatever to religion. Hear his own words: "But should this miracle be ascribed to any new system of religion, men in all ages have been so imposed upon by ridiculous stories of that kind, that this very circumstance would be full proof of a cheat, and sufficient with all men of sense, not only to make them reject the fact, but even reject it, without further examination." I have heard of a maxim, which, I believe, the Jesuits introduced, that that might be true in philosophy which was false in theology; but I never could have expected that a philosopher, a logician, and a metaphysician too, would utter any thing so unreasonable, and so marked with prejudice, as the declaration just quoted. The fact was admitted to have such evidence, that even philosophers *ought to receive it as certain.* But not if it is ascribed to a new religion. On this subject no evi-

common. The world, it seems, has  
posed on by ridiculous stories of this  
we must not even listen to any testimony  
of religious miracles. This author would  
reduce the advocates of religion to a  
dilemma. They are called upon to produce  
for their religion, but if they adduce  
men will not notice it; even if it is  
where else, it must go for nothing in religion.  
these principles, we might indeed give  
test; but we are not willing to admit  
sound logic, or good sense. The reason  
for proscribing, in this summary way, all  
evidence in favour of religion, will apply to  
jects. Men have been imposed on by  
stories in philosophy, as well as in religion.  
when the evidence is proposed, shall we not  
it, because there have been impositions  
the very reason why we do not believe in them.

tion in fact. Besides the Jewish and Christian religions, (which are indeed parts of the same,) it would, I believe, be difficult to point out any other which claims such an origin.

After all that has been said of the false maxims of the Jesuits, I doubt whether any one could be selected so perfectly at war with reason, as this of the Scotch philosopher: nay, I think, I may challenge all the enemies of revelation, to cull from any Christian writer a sentence so surcharged with prejudice.

But, to do justice to Mr. Hume; although he seems to have closed the door against all discussion, on our part, yet, in one of his general maxims, he leaves us one alternative. The maxim is this, "that no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless it be of such a kind, that its falsehood be more miraculous than the fact." An ingenious writer\* has undertaken to meet Mr. Hume on his own ground, and has endeavoured to prove, that the testimony of the apostles and the early Christians, if the facts reported by them were not true, is a greater miracle than any which they have recorded. But the maxim, as stated by Mr. Hume, is not correct. With the change of a single word, perhaps, it may be adopted, and will place the question on its proper ground. The change which I propose, is to substitute the word *improbable*, for *miraculous*. And it will then read, *no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more improbable than the fact which it endeavours to establish.* The ground of objection to the word *miraculous*, is, that it involves a false principle, which is, that facts are incredible in

\* Dr. Gleig.

than the one which is merely human  
tion only one at present. Man was  
diately created by God, or he proceeded  
natural cause. Need I ask, which of  
probable? and yet the first is miraculou  
not. The plain truth is, that in all c  
which has most evidence is most prob  
it be miraculous or natural. And whe  
relating to a proposition, is before the  
*true which is easiest to be believed*; beca  
to believe with evidence, than against

We are willing, therefore, that this  
stated, should be the ground of our de  
pledge ourselves to prove, that the fal  
miracles of the Gospel would be mor  
and consequently more incredible, tha  
the facts recorded in them. But this  
be reserved for another place. To c  
it has been shown, that there is no a

miracles, and the general disposition to credit them, are rather proofs that they have existed, than the contrary ; we may safely conclude, that Mr. Hume's argument, on this subject, is sophistical and delusive ; and that it is so far from being true, as he alleges, that they are incredible, whatever may be their evidence, when brought to support religion, that this is, of all others, that department in which they are most reasonable and credible.

#### THE MIRACLES OF THE GOSPEL ARE

HAVING shown, in the preceding chapters, that the miracles may be so attested as to be credible, we now proceed to examine the evidence by which the miracles recorded in the New Testament, may be

This is the main point in our inquiry. If all that has been said, it must be admitted, that less the Christian religion is attended with evidence, we cannot believe in it, even if

Before entering directly on this discussion, it will be useful to premise a few things respecting the nature and force of testimony which, it is admitted by all who have attended to the subject.

This species of evidence admits of all degrees, from the weakest probability to the most perfect assurance; for while, on this ground, we yield to reports the most hesitant,

presented to us in so many forms, that it is impossible to attribute to each its influence in gaining our assent. If we were asked, on what particular testimony we believe that there is such a place as Rome ? or why we believe that such a person as Buonaparte lately figured in Europe ? we could only answer, in the general, that multiplied testimonies of these facts had reached us, so that all possibility of doubting was excluded. The same assurance, and resting on the same grounds, is experienced in relation to facts which occurred in ages long past. Who can bring himself to doubt, whether such persons as Julius Cæsar, Paul, Mohammed, Columbus, or Luther, ever existed ? •

When we have obtained evidence to a certain amount, nothing is gained by the admission of more. The mind becomes, as it were, saturated, and no change in its conviction is produced by multiplying witnesses. One sound demonstration of a theorem in mathematics is as good as a hundred. A few upright witnesses who agree, and are uncontradicted by other evidence, are as satisfactory as any conceivable number. On a trial for murder, if there were a thousand witnesses who could attest the fact, a judicious court would not deem it necessary to examine more than half a dozen, or, at most, a dozen, if there were a perfect agreement in their testimony. Experience only can inform us what degree of evidence will produce complete conviction ; but we may judge from former experience, what will be the effect of the same evidence in future ; and from the effect on our own minds, what it will be on the minds of others.

*Testimony*, not of the strongest kind, may be so corroborated by circumstances, and especially, by the existing consequences of the facts reported, that



... calculation, it should be found  
must have been an eclipse of the sun  
and visible at that place, the veracity of  
in this case, would be confirmed beyond  
lity of doubt. Or should we find it re-  
anonymous author, that an earthquake,  
time, had overthrown a certain city ; wi-  
evidence, we should yield but a feeble a-  
statement ; but if, on personal observati-  
report of respectable travellers, it was  
that the ruins of an ancient city existed  
we should consider the truth of the histo-  
ly established.

The evidences of the Christian relig-  
sufficient, and yet not so strong as inevit-  
duce conviction. Our conduct in the  
reception of truth may be intended by  
to be an important part of that probatio-  
we are subjected : and therefore the said



## EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

ceive are never formed but with a view to accomplish some object desirable to those concerned. Not of men will be at the trouble of forging and propagating a falsehood, which promises them no profit or gratification. Much less will they engage in such an enterprise, with the view of bringing evil on themselves ; or when they foresee that it can be productive of nothing but pain and reproach.

Between truth and falsehood there is so great a difference, that it is extremely difficult for the latter to effectually to assume the garb, and exhibit the aspect of the former, as, upon a strict scrutiny, not to be detected. No imposture can stand the test of rigid inquiry ; and when the inquisition is made, the truth seldom remains doubtful : the fraud is pretty sure to become manifest. The style and manner of truth are entirely different from those of falsehood. The one pursues a direct course, is candid, unaffected, and honest ; the other evasive, cunning, tortuous, and inconsistent ; and is often betrayed by the efforts made to avoid discovery.

When both sides of a question are pressed with difficulties, reason teaches us to choose that which is attended with the fewest. Objectors to Christianity often forget to notice the difficulties of their own thesis. Every question has two sides ; if we receive the affirmative, we, of necessity, receive the consequences with all the consequences with which it may be attended. If we reject the evidence of Christianity and deny that miracles ever existed, we are to account for the existence of the Christian religion and for the conduct of the first preachers and of the believers, on other principles. And who thus unduly undertakes this, will impose on himself a difficult task. Gibbon has put forth his

the dictate of wisdom to lean to the  
this question, undoubtedly, the safe side  
religion ; for if we should be mistaken ,  
suffer no loss, and obtain some good but  
but a mistake on the other side must pr

When a proposition has been established  
and sufficient evidence, our faith ought  
shaken by every objection which we may  
to solve. To admit this, would be to  
scepticism, on all subjects ; for what then  
to which some objection may not be raised  
man can fully answer ? Even the clearest  
science are not exempt from objections  
It must be so, as long as our minds are  
and the extent of human knowledge  
That man judges incorrectly, who supposes  
when he has found out some objection to  
which cannot be satisfactorily answered  
ad a virtutem

this discussion, we shall take it for granted, that such a person as Jesus Christ lived in Judea, about the time mentioned by the evangelists ; that he inculcated a pure and sublime morality, lived a virtuous and unblameable life, and was put to death by Pontius Pilate, at the instigation of the Jewish rulers. Also, that his apostles went forth into various countries preaching to the people, and declaring that this crucified Jesus was a person sent from God, for the salvation of the world ; and that many were induced to connect themselves with the Christian church. These facts not being of a miraculous nature, and it being necessary to suppose some such events, deists have commonly admitted them. But Volney, in his *RUINS*, and some others, have imagined, that such a person as Jesus Christ never existed ; that this is the name of one of the celestial luminaries ; and that the Gospel history is an allegory. Such visionary theories do not deserve a serious answer ; they are subversive of all historical truth, and have not a shadow of evidence. They may be well left to sink by the weight of their own extravagance. Mons. Volney, however, has received a learned answer from a gentleman,\* who has met him on his own ground ; and, being as much attached to astronomical allegories as the Frenchman, has vanquished him with his own weapons.

In the examination of written testimony, the first requisite is, to prove the authenticity of the documents in which it is recorded. The evidence on which we depend for the truth of the miracles performed by Jesus Christ, and by his apostles, is contained in the New Testament. Here we have four distinct narratives of the life, miracles, death, resur-

\* Mr. Roberts.

bles addressed to the church in gene churches, and to individuals. These prophecy, compose the volume called tament.

These books are certainly not of re there are extant copies of the New T original Greek, which are at the le dred years old. And before the ti manuscripts were penned, we have, numerous testimonies to the existenc an Scriptures. They are not only quoted, expounded, and harmonised copy of the New Testament had b portion of it might have been reco of the numerous quotations in the writers. Besides, there are extant New Testament, into several langua very early period. By these means.



teacher, and performed extraordinary works in attestation of his mission, how is it possible that such a society could have been formed? To suppose such a thing, would be to conceive of a superstructure without a foundation. The resurrection of Christ from the dead, must have been an article of the faith of Christians from their very origin; for it is the corner stone of the whole edifice. Take the belief of this away, and the Christian system has no existence. There are also some external institutions peculiar to Christianity, which we must suppose to be coeval with the formation of the society, for they are the badges of the Christian profession, and constitute a part of their worship. I refer to baptism and the eucharist. To suppose, that, in some way, Christianity first existed, and afterwards received these articles of faith, and these institutions of worship, is too improbable to be admitted by any impartial man. It would be to suppose that a religious society existed without any principles; or that they rejected their original principles, and adopted new ones, and that they who imposed these upon them had the address to persuade them that they had always belonged to their system; than which it is not easy to conceive any thing more improbable. Let us for a moment attempt to imagine that, previously to the publication of the Gospels, the Christian church had among them no report of the miracles and institutions recorded in these books. When they opened them they would read, that their society was founded on the belief of the resurrection of Jesus, and that baptism and the eucharist were instituted by him before he left the world, and had existed among them ever since. *Nothing can be more evident, therefore, than that the substance of what is contained in the Gos-*

Unsub-

from the earliest mention of the  
cient fathers spoken of as a fact, un-  
among Christians, and contradic-  
And we must not suppose, that in  
Christianity, there was little care  
exercised, in ascertaining the true  
nuine character of the books in  
very reverse is the fact. The most  
were instituted into matters of th  
books were published in the nam  
professing to give an account of J  
were not genuine. The distinction  
of the New Testament and all oth  
was as clearly marked, in the earli  
ever been since. The writings o  
held in great veneration; were  
churches all over the world as th  
and directory of their lives; and

the idiom is Hebrew, or rather Syro-Chaldaic ; the vernacular tongue of Judea in the time of Christ and his apostles. This is a peculiarity which none could counterfeit ; and which demonstrates that the New Testament was not composed by men of a different country and age from those in which the apostles lived.

In the New Testament there are numerous references to rivers, mountains, seas, cities and countries, which none but a person well acquainted with the geography of Judea and the neighbouring countries, could have made without falling into innumerable errors. There is, moreover, incidental mention of persons and facts known from other authorities to have existed, and frequent allusions to manners and customs peculiar to the Jews.

From all these considerations it ought to be admitted without dispute, that these are indeed the writings of the apostles, and of those particular persons to whom they are ascribed. It would not, however, destroy their credibility, even if other persons had written them, since they were certainly composed in that age, and were received by the whole body of Christians. But what imaginable reason is there for doubting of the genuineness of these books ? What persons were so likely to write books to guide the faith of the church as the apostles ? If *they* did not write them, who would ? And why should they give the credit of them to others ? But their universal reception, without opposition or contradiction, should silence every cavil. The persons who lived at this time, who knew the apostles, and who were deeply interested in the subject, are the proper judges of this question. And they have decided it unanimously, as it relates to the historical books of the



uence or the genuineness of the  
of antiquity, except the opinion  
handed down by uncontradicted  
soon would Homer be deprived  
evidence was insisted on, as is  
nuineness of the books of the Ne  
tainly, as it respects evidence  
books of antiquity stand upon a l  
of the New Testament. The wo  
Latin historians and poets, have  
being the writings of the persons  
bear, as the writings of Matthew  
John. For here we have the te  
of individuals, but of numero  
scattered over the world. We  
dence of a kind which cannot be  
have in short, every kind of evi  
case admits. It may therefore b  
established fact, that the books  
ment are the genuine productio  
and consequently contain their te

pancies, which have occurred through the ignorance or carelessness of transcribers, but not more than might naturally be expected. There is no ancient book which has come down to us so entire as the Scriptures, and which is accompanied by so many means of correcting an erroneous reading where it has occurred. This representation may appear surprising to those who have heard of the vast multitude of various readings which learned critics have collected from a collation of the manuscripts; but it ought to be understood by all who have ever heard of these discrepancies, that not one in a thousand of them is of the least consequence; that a great majority of them are merely differences in orthography, in the collocation of words, or in the use of words perfectly synonymous, by which the sense is not in the least affected. A cursory reader would find as little difference in the various manuscripts of the New Testament, as in the different printed editions of the English version.

Having established the authenticity of the record which contains the testimony, we shall next proceed to consider its credibility.

The serious and candid attention of the reader is requested to the following remarks.

I. Many of the facts related in the gospels, are undoubtedly of a miraculous nature. It is declared, that Jesus Christ in several instances raised the dead; in one of which the person had been dead four days, so that the body began to be offensive to the smell. In every case, this miracle was wrought instantly, and without any other means than speaking a word. It is declared, that he healed multitudes of the most inveterate diseases; that he gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb,

... that the fragments that were much greater in quantity than materials; that he walked upon the word allayed the raging storm and calm. And finally it is repeatedly declared by all the witnesses, that being crucified, and after having sepulchre three days, rose from the showing himself frequently to his to heaven in their presence.

That all these were real miracles a moment doubt. It is true, we do powers of nature; but we do know we know any thing, that such works not be performed but by the immediate God: The same remark may be miracles wrought by the apostles in Lord Jesus; and especially to the miracle on the day of Pentecost.

sleight of hand, illusion of the senses, or any thing else, which could impose on the spectators. This circumstance is important, because it proves to a certainty that the apostles themselves could not be deluded and deceived in the testimony which they have given. To suppose that they could think that they saw such miracles every day for years, and yet be deceived, would be nearly as extravagant a supposition, as that we were deceived in all that we ever experienced.

III. The character of the miracles recorded in the Gospel, ought to be carefully observed. They were all worthy of the majesty, justice, and benevolence of the Son of God. They are characterized by dignity, propriety, and kindness. Most of them, indeed, were acts of tender compassion to the afflicted. Although so many miracles were performed, in so great a variety of circumstances; yet there is nothing ludicrous, puerile, or vindictive in any of them. Christ never exerted his power to gratify the curiosity of any, or to supply his own daily wants. He made no ostentatious display of his wonderful power, and never used it to acquire wealth and influence. While he fed hungry multitudes by a miracle, he submitted to hunger and want himself, while he could command all nature, he remained in poverty, not having so much as a home of any kind, to which he could retire to find repose. Although he was rejected and ill-treated by the Jews, yet he never refused to relieve any who sincerely sought his aid. His life, in consequence of the multitudes who flocked to him was fatiguing, and on many accounts unpleasant, but he never grew weary in doing good.

*Let any man compare the narrative of the miracles of Christ, contained in the genuine Gospels, with*

ascribed by the followers of Mohammed  
postor; or those contained in the li  
church of Rome. I know not how  
man can read attentively the account o  
recorded in the Gospels, and not be co  
the very nature and circumstances of th  
ed, that they were real.

IV. There are no signs of fraud or impos  
covered in the record itself. There is, c  
every indication of truth, honesty, and g  
in the writers. Although they differ fr  
in style and manner, so much, that it i  
the same person did not compose the f  
yet there is a character of style which  
whole of them, and which is withi  
among any writers but the penmen  
Scriptures. It is an apparent exemp  
passions and frailties of human nature  
stupendous miracles are related without  
tion of wonder from the historian: an  
least appearance of a desire to excite  
the reader

they never fall, as men usually do, into pathetic declamation. They are never carried away from their simple course by the power of sympathy. The facts are related, as though the writer felt nothing but the strong purpose of declaring the truth, without giving any colour whatever to the facts. Neither do they indulge themselves in those vehement expressions of indignation against the enemies of Christ, which we should naturally have expected. They never give utterance to a harsh expression against any one. They relate the treachery of Judas with the same unaffected simplicity, as if they had no feelings relative to his base conduct.

But there is something which exhibits the true character of the writers in a light still stronger. It is the manner in which they speak of themselves. Few men can write much concerning themselves without betraying the strength of self-love. Weak men when they get on this topic are commonly disgusting: and even when persons seem willing to let the truth be known, there is usually an effort discoverable, to seek compensation in something for every sacrifice which they make of reputation. But we may challenge any one to designate any instance, in which the least indication of this moral weakness has been given by the Evangelists. They speak of themselves, and their companions, with the same candour, which characterizes their narrative in regard to others. They describe, in the most artless manner, the lowness of their origin, the meanness of their occupations, the grossness of their ignorance, the inveteracy of their prejudices, their childish contentions for superiority, their cowardice in the hour of danger, and the fatal apostacy of one, and temporary delinquency of another of their number. If any person supposes that

... is a wonderful thing. Few of mechanics confined all their lives to labors, and untutored in the art of composition, could produce, without committing great narrative of their own lives. But, that man an education should possess such self-conscious self-denial, as is manifest in these compositions, not be easily accounted for, on common principles.

That, however, which deserves our special attention, is the absence of all appearance of I should like to ask a candid infidel, to peruse the Gospel, some fact, or speech, which in the remotest degree, tends to prove that the world is a bad end in view. I need not say, that I find nothing of the kind. Then, upon this basis, we have this extraordinary fact; that if written by impostors, who have imposed upon the world a series of falsehoods, do, in no part betray the least appearance of self-interest.

None has made himself more conspicuous in this way, than J. J. Rousseau, who professes to exhibit to the world, a full confession of his faults, during a period of many years. And to do him justice, he has exposed to view moral turpitude enough, to make, if it were possible, a demon blush. But this infatuated man gloried in his shame : and declared it to be his purpose, when called before the tribunal of Heaven, to appear with his book in his hand, and present it to his Judge, as his confession and apology. Through the transparent covering of affectation, we may observe the most disgusting pride and arrogance. While common sense and decency are outraged, by a needless confession of deeds which ought not to be once named, he is so far from exhibiting any thing of the character of a true penitent, that he rather appears as the shameless apologist of vice. By his unreserved disclosures, he aspired to a new sort of reputation and glory. Perhaps there is not in any language, a composition more strongly marked with pride and presumption. His confessions were manifestly made in a confidence of the corruption of mankind, from whom he expected much applause for his candour, and small censure for his vices ; but as he has appealed, also, to another tribunal, we may be permitted to doubt, whether he will there find as much applause, and as slight condemnation, as he affected to expect. Between such impious confessions as these, and the simple, humble, and sober statements of the Evangelists, there can be no comparison.

There is only one other thing, in the style of the apostles, which I wish to bring into view. In all the detailed narratives which they have given of Jesus Christ, no allusion is ever made to his per-



the impulse of their own feelings, would every allusion to this subject.

V. There is no just ground of objection to the testimony, on account of the paucity of witnesses. In regard to most facts handed down by authentic history, it is seldom that more than two or three historians testify to the same things; and in many cases, we receive the testimony of one as sufficient, if all the circumstances first corroborate his narrative. But, in the case of the Gospels, we have four distinct and independent witnesses, all perfectly acquainted with the facts which they relate. Two of these, Matthew and John, were members of the twelve, who accompanied Jesus; he went, and saw from day to day the things which he performed. Mark and Luke might have been eye witnesses. Many think that the number of the seventy disciples, sent by Christ to preach; but if they were not, they have been his followers, and have been sent in Jerusalem and other places where he was present.

to accompany Paul in his labours, and was almost constantly with him, until his first imprisonment at Rome, at which time, his history of the life and labours of that apostle terminates.

Besides these four Evangelists, who have professedly written an account of the miracles of Jesus Christ, we have the incidental testimony of those apostles who wrote the epistles, especially of Paul. It is true, Paul was not one of the twelve apostles who accompanied Christ on earth; but he became an apostle, under such circumstances, as rendered his testimony as strong as that of any other witness. He informs us, that he was met by Jesus near to Damascus, when he was "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" against the disciples of Christ; who appeared to him in the midst of a resplendent light, and spoke to him. From that moment he became his devoted follower, and the most laborious and successful preacher of the Gospel. He abandoned the most flattering worldly prospects which any young man in the Jewish nation could have. He possessed genius, learning, an unblemished character for religion and morality, was in high favour with the chief men of his nation, and seems to have been more zealous than any other individual to extirpate Christianity. How can it be accounted for, that he should suddenly become a Christian, unless he did indeed see the risen Jesus? Instead of bright worldly prospects, which he had before, he was now subjected to persecution and contempt, wherever he went. The catalogue of only a part of his sufferings, which he gives in one of his epistles, is enough to appal the stoutest heart: yet he never repented of his becoming a Christian, but continued to devote all his energies to the promotion of the Gos-

and liable to great objection. His mind had been long informed with Christianity; and yet by some he was converted to be a zealous follower of all his life a deep and unvaried truth of the Gospel.† To him who has not written a Gospel, has given us access to the truth of the leading question. Especially, he is a witness on the subject of the resurrection. He not only saw and conversed with the risen Saviour, but has informed us of great importance, not many of the Evangelists. He asserts that he saw a hundred persons at one time, and still living when he wrote. Is this falsehood in this declaration, has it been detected? His letters, now transcribed, and conveyed to the public, and how easy would it have

hood of such a declaration, if it had not been a fact? But almost every page of Paul's writings recognises as true the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is constantly assumed as a truth most assuredly believed by all Christians. It is the great motive of exertion and source of consolation in all his epistles. And when he would convince certain heretics of the absurdity of denying the resurrection of the body, he reduces them to this conclusion, that "if the dead rise not, then is Christ not risen," which would be at once to subvert the Christian religion. His appeal to the common assured belief of Christians is remarkably strong, and pertinent to our purpose; "*If,*" says he, "*Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up if so be that the dead rise not.*" Would any man in his senses have written thus, if the resurrection of Christ had not been a fundamental article of faith among Christians; or if he had not been fully persuaded of its truth? Had Paul been an impostor, would he have dared to appeal to five hundred persons, most of whom were living, for the truth of what he knew to be false? How easy and how certain must have been the detection of an imposture thus conducted.

The same is evident from the epistles of the other Apostles, and from the Apocalypse.

Now, when we can clearly ascertain what any persons believed, in relation to a fact, we have virtually their testimony to that fact, because when they come forward and give testimony explicitly, they do no more than express the conviction of their own minds. Certainly then, if we can by any means ascertain what

from the beginning did believe in it  
in the Gospels and epistles of the  
the strongest possible evidence. It  
testably, from the fact of their beco  
for how could they be Christians  
Christianity? unless any one will b  
as to believe that not only the Apost  
converts were wilful deceivers. It  
from the manner in which Christian  
by the Apostles, in all the epistles.  
moment, that the Corinthian church  
the resurrection of Christ when the  
above-mentioned epistle from Paul ;  
have considered him perfectly insane  
versal reception of the Gospels and  
Christian churches throughout the wo  
possible evidence that they believed  
tained. These books were adopted as  
guide of all Christians. It is manifest,  
we are in possession of the testimon  
primitive church, to the truth of the -



perceive that its force would have been sensibly greater had it been transmitted to us with all the formalities just mentioned. There is, therefore, no defect in the number of witnesses. If every one of the twelve Apostles had written a Gospel, and a hundred other persons had done the same, the evidence would not be essentially improved. We should have no more after all, than the testimony of the whole primitive church, which, as has been proved, we possess already.

VI. The credibility of the testimony is not impaired by any want of agreement among the witnesses. In their attestation to the leading facts, and to the doctrines and character of Christ, they are perfectly harmonious. The selection of facts by the several Evangelists is different, and the same fact is sometimes related more circumstantially by one than another ; yet there is no inconsistency between them. In their general character and prominent features, there is a beautiful harmony in the Gospels. There is no difference which can affect in the judgment of the impartial, the credibility of the testimony which they contain. If all the Evangelists had recorded precisely the same facts, and all the circumstances in the same order, the Gospels would have the appearance of having been written in concert, which would weaken their testimony. But it is almost demonstrable, from internal evidence, that the Evangelists, with the exception of John, never had seen each other's productions before they wrote. Their agreement, therefore, ought to have the effect of witnesses examined apart from each other ; and their discrepancies serve to prove, that there could be no concerted scheme to deceive ; for in that case, every appearance of this kind would have been carefully removed.

I am aware, however, that on the ground of supposed contradictions, or irreconcilable discrepancies, the most formidable attacks have been made on Christianity. It is entirely incompatible with the narrow limits of this essay, to enter into a consideration of the various methods which have been adopted for harmonizing the Gospels, and removing the difficulties which arise from their variations. I can only make a few general observations, with the view of leading the reader to the proper principles of solution.

It ought to be kept in mind, that the Gospels were written almost two thousand years ago, in a language not now spoken ; in a remote country, whose manners and customs were very different from ours. In all such cases, there will be obscurities and difficulties arising entirely from the imperfection of our knowledge.

The Gospels do not purport to be regular histories

they had professed to give an accurate account of the *number* healed, there would be ground for this objection ; but this was no part of the design of the Evangelists.

If a writer, with a view of exhibiting the skill of an oculist, should mention a remarkable instance of sight being restored to a person who had been long blind, it could not be fairly inferred from the narrative, that no other person received the same benefit at that time ; and if another person should give a distinct account of all the cases, there would be no contradiction between these witnesses. All the difference is, that one selects a prominent fact out of many, the other descends to all the particulars.

There is no source of difficulty more usual than the confounding of things which are distinct. The narratives of events truly distinct, may have so striking a similarity, that the cursory reader will be apt to confound them. It has been remarked by a learned man,\* that if the two miracles of feeding the multitude had been mentioned by two different Evangelists, each mentioning one, it would have been supposed by many that they were accounts of the same occurrence, and that the Evangelists did not agree in their testimony ; but in this case both these miracles are distinctly related by the same Evangelist, and distinctly referred to by Christ in his conversation with his disciples. This confounding of distinct things is never more commonly done, than when a fact was attended with a great number of circumstances and occurrences, rapidly succeeding each other, and the historian mentions only a few out of many. This remark is fully verified with respect to Christ's resurrection: The

\* Dr. Macknight.





Evangelist mentions only a few of the occurrences, there should seem at first some discrepancy in their accounts.

Companies of women are mentioned but it is hastily taken for granted that they were the same ; and the objector proceeds on the supposition that these women all arrived at the sepulchre at the same time, and that they continued together till they agreed to meet at the sepulchre, probably at very different distances from the place, without considering the agitation and distraction of the reports and visions of this interesting event. But on this, as on several other subjects, we are indebted to the enemies of revelation, for the occasion of bringing forward able men who shed so much light on this part of the Gospel, that even the appearance of discrepancy is

them. Why it was proper to give the descent of Joseph the husband of Mary, it is not now necessary to inquire. But on this whole subject, I would remark, that we are very little acquainted with the plan on which genealogical tables were constructed. It seems to have been a very intricate business, and it is not surprising that we should be at a loss to elucidate every difficulty.

Again, it is highly probable that these lists were taken from some genealogical tables of the tribe and family of the persons to whom they refer. Every family must have had access to such tables, on account of their inheritance. Public tables, of acknowledged authority, would be far better for the purpose which the Evangelists had in view, than new ones, even though these should have been more full and accurate. These genealogies had no other object than to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was a lineal descendant of David and Abraham ; which purpose is completely answered by them ; and there are no difficulties which may not be accounted for by our ignorance of the subject.

Finally, it may be admitted, that some slight inaccuracies have crept into the copies of the New Testament, through the carelessness of transcribers. It is impossible for men to write the whole of a book, without making some mistakes ; and if there be some small discrepancies in the Gospels, with respect to names and numbers, they ought to be attributed to this cause.

VII. The witnesses of the miracles of Christ could have had no conceivable motive for propagating an imposture. That they were not themselves deceived is manifest from the nature of the facts, and from the full opportunity which they had of examining them.

should have ever conceived it possible to do  
world in such a case, is equally inconceivable  
men had worldly interests, which it was rather  
them to regard ; but every thing of this kind  
fully relinquished. They engaged in an enterprise  
not only dangerous, but attended with certain  
immediate ruin to all their worldly interests  
exposed themselves to the indignation of all  
rity, and to the outrageous fury of the monarch.  
They must have foreseen that they would bring  
upon themselves the vengeance of the civil  
ecclesiastical powers, and that every species of  
punishment awaited them. Their leader was crucified  
what could they expect from declaring themselves  
alive, and had performed wonderful miracles  
they could have entertained any hopes of escape  
from evils so apparent, experience must have  
convinced them that they had engaged not in a  
wicked, but most unprofitable undertaking.

of *Christian*. They were vilified as the most contemptible miscreants that ever lived; as the refuse and offscouring of all things; as the pests and disturbers of society, and the enemies of the gods. They were pursued as outlaws, and punished for no other reason, but because they acknowledged themselves to be Christians. Would men persevere in propagating an imposture for such fame as this? It cannot be supposed that they expected their compensation in another world; for the supposition is, that they were wilful impostors, who were every day asserting, in the most solemn manner, what they knew to be utterly false. It would be as reasonable to suppose, that the murderer or highway robber is influenced, in the commission of his atrocious crimes, by the hope of a future reward.

The only alternative is, to suppose that they were fanatics; as it is known, that men under the government of enthusiasm, condemn all the common considerations which usually influence human conduct, and often act in a way totally unaccountable. This representation of enthusiasm is just, but it will not answer the purpose for which it is adduced. Enthusiasts are always strongly persuaded of the truth of the religion which they wish to propagate; but these men, upon the hypothesis under consideration, knew that all which they said was false. Enthusiasm and imposture are irreconcilable. It is true, that what begins in enthusiasm, may end in imposture; but in this case, the imposture must have been the beginning as well as the end of the whole business. There was no room for enthusiasm, all was imposture, if the facts reported were not true. But the best evidence that the Evangelists were not wild fanatics, is derived from their writings. These are at the greatest

remove from the ravings or reveries of enthusiasm. They are the most simple, grave, and dispassionate narratives that were ever written. These I certainly were not the production of crazy fanatics. The writers are actuated by no frenzy; they give no indication of a heated imagination; they speak uniformly the language of "truth and soberness."

VIII. But if we could persuade ourselves that the apostles might have been actuated, by some unknown and inconceivable motive, to forge the whole account of Christ's miracles; and were impelled by some accountable frenzy to persevere through all difficulties and sufferings, to propagate lies; yet, can we believe that they could have found followers, in the country and in the very city where the miracles are stated to have been performed?

When these accounts of stupendous and numerous miracles were published in Jerusalem, when

been the least difficulty in accomplishing the object, if the testimony of these witnesses had been false? The places of many of the miracles are recorded, and the names of the persons healed, or raised from the dead, mentioned. It was only one or two miles to the dwelling of Lazarus; how easy would it have been to prove, that the story of his resurrection was a falsehood, had it not been a fact? Indeed, Jerusalem itself, and the temple were the scenes of many of the miracles ascribed to Christ. As he spent much time in that city, it is presumable, that not a person residing there could have been totally ignorant of facts which must have occupied the attention and excited the curiosity of every body. An imposture like this could never be successful in such circumstances. The presence of an interested, inimical, and powerful body of men would soon have put down every attempt at an imposition so gross, and groundless. If the apostles had pretended, that at some remote period, or in some remote country, a man had performed miracles, they might have persuaded some weak and credulous persons; but they appealed to the people to whom they preached, as the witnesses of what they related. No more than a few weeks had elapsed after the death of Jesus, before this testimony was published in Jerusalem: and, notwithstanding all the opposition of those in authority, it was received, and multitudes willingly offered themselves as the disciples of him, whom they had recently crucified.

The success of the Gospel, under the circumstances of its first publication, is one of the most wonderful events recorded in history, and it is a fact beyond all dispute. In a little time, thousands of persons embraced the Christian religion in Jerusalem

of unoffending Christians were put to death in a cruel manner ; yet this cause seemed to prevail more, so that it became a proverb, that " of the martyrs was the seed of the church." It went on increasing and prevailing, until in three centuries, it became the religion of the world.

Learned infidels have in vain attempted to find an adequate cause for this event, on natural principles. Gibbon, as has been before stated, employed all his ingenuity to account for the progress and establishment of Christianity ; but although he indulged conjecture, and disregarded the facts of history, his efforts have been unavailing. His account which he has given is entirely unsatisfactory. Upon the deistical hypothesis, it is a grantion, without any adequate cause. That a few learned and simple men, mostly fishermen or laborers, should have been successful in changing the

an impression on the minds of men as was requisite to bring about such a revolution.

2. The places in which the Gospel was first preached, and had greatest success, furnish proof that it could not have been propagated merely by human means. These were not obscure corners, remote from the lights of science, but the most populous and polished cities, where every species of the learning of the age was concentrated, and whither men of learning resorted. Damascus, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi, and Rome, furnished the theatre for the first preachers of the Gospel. It is believed, that there was no conspicuous city, in the central part of the Roman empire, in which a Christian church was not planted, before the death of the apostles. And it ought to be remembered, that this did not occur in a dark age, but in what is acknowledged by all, to be the most enlightened age of antiquity: it was the period which immediately succeeded the AUGUSTAN AGE, so much and so deservedly celebrated for its classical authors. If the Gospel had been an imposture, its propagators would never have gone to such places, in the first instance; or if they had, they could not have escaped detection.

3. The obstacles to be overcome were great, and insurmountable by human effort. The people were all attached to the respective superstitions in which they had been educated, and which were well adapted to retain their hold of corrupt minds. How difficult it is to obtain even a hearing, from people in such circumstances, is manifest from the experience of all missionaries in modern times. Philosophers, priests, and rulers, were combined against them. *All that learning, eloquence, prejudice, interest, and power could oppose to them, stood in their way.*



held in great contempt, by all the surround  
A few persons of this nation, exhibiting a  
appearance, as must have been the case, ' '  
called forth nothing but derision and cont  
of the large cities of the Empire. It is n  
ly that they should have been able to make  
verts, than it would be now, for a few p  
mechanics to proselyte to Judaism vast m  
all the principal cities of Europe and Ame


5. The terms of discipleship, which th  
proposed, and the doctrines which they  
were not adapted to allure and flatter the  
must have been very repulsive to the mind

6. Many Christians were cut off by p  
but still Christianity made progress, and w  
ed in all directions. Because Christianity  
and flourished under bloody persecutions,  
sons have adopted it as a maxim, that i  
has a tendency to promote any cause : the

embrace the truth, and inspired them with more than heroic fortitude, in suffering for the sake of their religion.

IX. The Apostles, and many of the primitive Christians, attested the truth by martyrdom. They sealed their testimony with their blood. To this argument it is sometimes answered, that men may suffer martyrdom for a false as well as a true religion; and that in fact, men have been willing to die for opinions, in direct opposition to each other. While this is admitted, it does not affect the argument now adduced. All, that dying for an opinion can prove, (and of this it is the best possible evidence) is the sincerity of the witnesses.—But in the case before us, the sincerity of the witnesses proves the facts in question; for we have seen that they could not themselves have been deceived. Every martyr had the opportunity of knowing the truth of the facts on which Christianity was founded, and by suffering death in attestation of them, he has given the most impressive testimony that can be conceived.

The sufferings of the primitive Christians, for their religion, were exceedingly great, and are attested by Heathen as well as Christian writers. It is a circumstance of great importance, in this argument, that they could at once have escaped all these torments, by renouncing Christianity. To bring them to this, was the sole object of their persecutors; and uniformly, it was put to their choice, to offer sacrifice or incense to the heathen gods, or be tormented. One word would have been sufficient to deliver them; one easy action would have restored them to worldly comforts and honours. But they steadfastly adhered to their profession. Some, indeed, were overcome by the cruelty of their persecutors, but was it ever



remembered, that no person  
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serve a good conscience.

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of the primitive Christians  
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solve. Persons of all ages,  
and of both sexes, exhibited u  
torments, a fortitude, a patient  
charity and forgiveness, a chee-  
umphant joy, of which there ar  
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were arrested; cheerfully bid  
and dearest relatives; gladly  
welcomed the wild beasts let  
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for such superiority to pain and death? Could attachment to an impostor inspire them with such feelings? No, it was the promised presence of the risen JESUS which upheld them, and filled them with assurance and joy. It was the PARACLETE, promised by the Lord, who poured into their hearts a peace and joy so complete that they were scarcely sensible of the wounds inflicted on their bodies.

Proud and obstinate men may, for ought I know, suffer death for what they are secretly convinced is not true; but that multitudes, of all conditions, should joyfully suffer for what they knew to be an imposture, is impossible. Tender women, and venerable old men, were among the most conspicuous of the martyrs of JESUS. *They loved not their lives unto the death*, and having given their testimony and sealed it with their blood, they are now clothed in white robes, and bear palms in their hands, and sing the song of Moses and the LAMB. Blessed martyrs, they have rested from their labours, and their works have followed them!

X. The last particular which I shall mention to set the testimony of the witnesses to the miracles of the Gospel in its true light, is, that there is no counter testimony. These witnesses have never been confronted and contradicted by others. Whatever force or probability their declarations are entitled to from the circumstances of the case, and from the evidences which we possess of their integrity and intelligence, suffers no deduction, on account of other persons giving a different testimony.

The Jewish priests and rulers did, indeed, cause to be circulated a story relative to the dead body of Christ, contrary to the testimony of the apostles, which has been handed down to us by the Evangelists.

have invented any thing more nothing, however, except that while the soldiers slept, and testify might have risen from the testimony of the apostles.

Deists sometimes demand of enemies, as well as the friends of which I would reply, that the all that can be reasonably expected they should come forward, voluntarily in favour of a religion, which, the worldly policy they opposed, could not be expected. Now, since they would not do these facts if it had been in their power, this very circumstance furnishes the strongest negative we can possess. And no other negative which is negative, or merely incidental, can be expected from the enemies of a religion like Paul's.



they were wrought by magic, or by the power of the venerable name of JEHOVAH, called *teragrammaton*, which they ridiculously pretend Jesus stole out of the temple, and by which he performed wonderful works.

From what has been said, I trust it is sufficiently manifest, that we have such testimony for the miracles of the New Testament as will render them credible, in the view of all impartial persons. We have shown that the miracles recorded are *real* miracles ;—that they were performed in an open and public manner ;—that the witnesses could not possibly have been deceived themselves ;—that enemies had every opportunity and motive for disproving the facts if they had not been true,—that there is every evidence of sincerity and honesty in the Evangelists ; that the Epistles of the Apostles furnish strong collateral proof of the same facts ;—that all Christians from the beginning, must have believed in these miracles, and they must therefore be considered competent witnesses ;—that none of the witnesses could have any motive to deceive ;—that they never could have succeeded in imposing such a fraud on the world, if they could have attempted it ;—that it would have been the easiest thing in the world, for the Jewish rulers to have silenced such reports if they had been false ;—that the commencement of preaching at Jerusalem, and the success of Christianity there, cannot be accounted for, on any other principles, than the truth of the miracles ;—that the conduct of the Apostles in going to the most enlightened countries and cities, and their success in those places, can never be reconciled with the idea that they were ignorant impostors ;—that the astonishing progress of *the Gospel*, in the midst of opposition and persecution, and the extraordinary temper of the primitive

Now, when all these things are fairly and fully considered, is it not reasonable to conclude, that it is more probable that miracles should have been performed, than that such a body of testimony, so corroborated by circumstances, and by facts, reach to our own times, should be false ?

If all this testimony is false, we may call in question all historical testimony whatever ; for what facts have been so fully attested ?

But why should this testimony be rejected ? No reason has ever been assigned, except that the facts were miraculous ; but we have shown, that it is unreasonable to expect miracles in such a case ; that miracles are capable of satisfactory proof by testimony. It is therefore a just conclusion, **THE MIRACLES OF THE GOSPEL ARE CREDIBLE.**

## CHAPTER VI.

THE BIBLE CONTAINS PREDICTIONS OF EVENTS, WHICH NO HUMAN SAGACITY COULD HAVE FORESEEN, AND WHICH HAVE BEEN EXACTLY AND REMARKABLY ACCOMPLISHED.

THE subject of prophecy is so extensive, and the difficulty of presenting, with brevity, the argument which it furnishes, so great ; that if I had not determined to give a general outline of the evidences of revelation, I should have omitted this topic, as one to which justice cannot be done, in so short an essay.

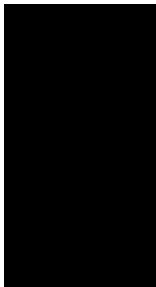
But, I would not be understood as intimating, that the evidence from prophecy is of an inferior kind. So far from believing this to be the fact, I am persuaded, that whoever will take the pains to examine the subject thoroughly, will find that this source of evidence from the truth of revelation, is exceeded by no other, in the firmness of conviction which it is calculated to produce. Prophecy possesses, as a proof of divine revelation, some advantages which are peculiar. For the proof of miracles we must have recourse to ancient testimony ; but the fulfilling of prophecy may fall under our own observation, or may be conveyed to us by living witnesses. The evidence of miracles cannot, in any case, become stronger than it was at first ; but that of prophecy is continually increasing, and will go on increasing until the whole scheme of prophecy is fulfilled. The mere publication of a prediction furnishes no decisive evi-



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come more and more interesting every day; and they will shed more and more light on the truth of the Scriptures.

What I shall attempt at present, and all that is compatible with the narrow limits of this discourse, will be to present to view, a few remarkable predictions, and refer to the events in which they have been fulfilled. They who wish for further satisfaction, will find it, in the perusal of bishop Newton's excellent Dissertations on the Prophecies, to which I acknowledge myself indebted for a considerable part of what is contained in this chapter.

The first prophecies which I will produce, are those of Moses respecting the Jews. They are recorded, principally, in the xxvi. chapter of Leviticus, and in the xxviii. chapter of Deuteronomy; of which, the following predictions deserve our attention.

1. "The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand." This prophecy had an accomplishment both in the invasion of Judea by the Chaldeans, and by the Romans; but more especially the latter. Jeremiah, when predicting the invasion of the Chaldeans, uses nearly the same language as Moses; "Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from afar, O house of Israel, saith the Lord, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not" — And again, "Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven."†

But with still greater propriety may it be said that the Romans were a nation *from afar*; the rapidity of whose conquests resembled the eagle's

\* Jer. x. 15.

† Lam. iv. 19.

Chaldeans. It is said, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 1 God brought upon the Jews, "the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword at the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young men or maidens, old men or women that stooped for age." Such also were the Chaldeans. Josephus informs us that when Vespasian took Gadara, 'he slew all, man by man, the young and the old, showing mercy to no age.' The like was done at Gamala.

2. It was predicted, also, that their cities should be besieged and taken, "and he shall besiege thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst." This was fulfilled. Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, came up against Samaria, and besieged it, and at the end of three years he took it: \* when Sennacherib came up against Jerusalem, and besieged it, and at the end of eighteen months he took it; and when Nebuchadnezzar came up against Jerusalem, and besieged it, and at the end of twelve months he took it.

should distress them." Accordingly, at Samaria during the siege, there was a great famine, so "that an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver."<sup>a</sup>

And when Jerusalem was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar, "the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land."<sup>†</sup> And in the siege of the same city by the Romans, there was a most distressing famine.<sup>‡</sup>

It was foretold that in these famines women should eat their own children; "Ye shall eat," says Moses, "the flesh of your sons and of your daughters." And again, "thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body."<sup>§</sup>—The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness—she shall eat her children for want of all things, secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in thy gates." This extraordinary prediction was fulfilled, six hundred years after it was spoken, in the siege of Samaria by the king of Syria; when two women agreed together to give up their children to be eaten; and one of them was eaten accordingly.|| It was fulfilled again, nine hundred years after Moses, in the siege of Jerusalem, by the Chaldeans. "The hands of the pitiful women," says Jeremiah, "have sodden their own children."<sup>¶</sup> And again, fifteen hundred years after the time of Moses, when Jerusalem was besieged by the Romans, Josephus informs us, of a noble woman killing and eating her own sucking child, and when she had eaten half, she secreted the other part for another meal.

<sup>a</sup> 2 Kings vi. 5.

<sup>†</sup> Josephus de Jud. Bello.

<sup>‡</sup> 2 Kings vi. 28, 29.

<sup>§</sup> 2 Kings xxv. 3.

<sup>||</sup> Jer. xxvi. 29; Deut. xxviii. 53

<sup>¶</sup> Lam. iv. 10.

Perhaps, since the creation of the persons never perished in any one.

The occasion of so great a multitude being found at Jerusalem, was, that commenced about the celebration of the Passover, the people throughout the adjacent country fled to the city for refuge in Jerusalem, at the approach of the Roman army.

Moses also predicted, that the Jews would be carried back to Egypt and sold as slaves at a low price, and described the method of their transportation thither; "And the Lord shall bring you into Egypt again with ships, where you shall be sold to your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you." Josephus relates, that when the city was taken, the captives, who were above seventeen years of age, were sent to Egypt; but so little care was tak-

whither thou goest to possess it. And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from one end of the earth, even unto the other."

How remarkably this has been fulfilled, is known to all. The ten tribes were first carried away from their own land, by the king of Assyria; and next, the two other tribes were carried captive to Babylon; and finally, when the Romans took away *their place and nation* their dispersion was complete.

Afterwards, Adrian forbade the Jews, by a public edict, to set foot in Jerusalem, on pain of death, or even to approach the country round it. In the time of Tertullian and Jerome, they were prohibited from entering into Judea. And from that day to this the number of Jews in the holy land, has been very small. They are still exiles from their own land, and are found scattered through almost every country in the globe.

5. But it is foretold, that notwithstanding their dispersion, they should not be totally destroyed, but should exist still as a distinct people. "And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them." 'What a marvellous thing is this,' says Bishop Newton, 'that after so many wars, battles, and sieges; after so many rebellions, massacres, and persecutions; after so many years of captivity, slavery, and misery; they are not *destroyed utterly*, and though scattered among all people, yet subsist a distinct people by themselves; where is any thing like this to be found in all the histories, and in all the nations under the sun?'

The prophecy goes on to declare, that they should be every where in an uneasy condition; and should

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and despised. They have been literally a proverb, and a by-word. Mohammedans, Heathens, and Christians, however they differ in other things, have been agreed in villifying, abusing, and persecuting the Jews. Surely the judgments visited on this peculiar people have been wonderful and of long continuance. For nearly eighteen hundred years, they have been in this miserable state of banishment, dispersion, and persecution.

‘What nation,’ says the distinguished writer already quoted, ‘hath subsisted as a distinct people in their own country, so long as these have done in their dispersion into all countries? And what a standing miracle is thus exhibited to the view and observation of the whole world!’ ‘Here are instances of prophecies delivered above three thousand years ago, and yet, as we see, fulfilling in the world at this very time; and what stronger proofs can we desire of the divine legation of Moses? How these instances may affect others, I know not, but for myself I must acknowledge, they not only convince, but amaze and astonish me beyond expression.’

The prophecies in the Old Testament, concerning Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, and Egypt, are highly deserving our attention; not only because they are expressed in the plainest language, but because the fulfilment of them has not been confined to one age, but has continued for thousands of years, and is as remarkable at this time, as in any former period; but the narrow limits which we have prescribed to ourselves forbid our entering on this subject.

The prophecy of Isaiah respecting Cyrus by name, two hundred years before he was born, is very clear, and no less remarkable.

“That saith of Cyrus, he is my shepherd, and shi



anointed, to Cyrus whose right hand I have hold  
to subdue nations before him, and I will loose  
loins of kings to open before him the two leaved ga  
that shall not be shut. I will go before thee and ma  
the crooked places straight ; I will break in pieces  
gates of brass, and will cut in sunder the bars of ir  
and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, a  
hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest kn  
that I, the Lord, which call thee by thy name, am  
God of Israel. For Jacob my servant's sake, a  
Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by t  
name, I have surnamed thee, though thou hast r  
known me."\*

It may be safely affirmed, however, that the m  
closely these prophecies are compared with sub  
quent events—events altogether improbable in the  
selves, and of a truly extraordinary character—t  
more clearly will the impartial and discerning see  
them marks of a divine origin.

The prophecies recorded in the book of Dan  
also are very wonderful. There we have describ

the prophecy must have been written after the events occurred. The infidel can make no complaint of obscurity here as he commonly does, when prophecies are adduced ; the objection now is, that the prediction is too manifest and circumstantial. This objection of Porphyry : induced Jerome to use the following pertinent language. " Cujus impugnatio testimonium veritatis est. Tanta enim dictorum fides fuit, ut propheta incredulis hominibus non videatur futura dixisse, sed narrasse, praeterita." The meaning of which is, ' This objection is a testimony to the truth ; for such is the perspicuity of the language, that the prophet, in the opinion of infidel men, seems rather to be narrating past events, than predicting those which are future.'

It will be sufficient to observe, that there is not the least foundation for this opinion of Porphyry, that the book of Daniel was written after the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. Josephus relates that the prophecies of Daniel were shown to Alexander the great, when he visited Jerusalem, and that this was the reason of his granting so many privileges to the Jewish people. However this may be, Daniel is spoken of in the first book of Maccabees ; and Josephus himself reckons him among the greatest of prophets. And if they had been written at that late period, they never could have found a place in the Jewish canon, as the prophecies of Daniel. These prophecies are also recognised and quoted by Jesus Christ, as the productions of Daniel.

We are informed by Josephus, that after Cyrus had got possession of Babylon, this prophecy was shown to him, and that he was struck with admiration at the manifest divinity of the writing. Besides the name of Cyrus, two extraordinary events are

of the argument.

The prophecies which require numerous and interesting, critical discussion, that to exhibit in full light, a volume would scarcely be contented to relate of these predictions, in any way.

1. It is plain, from a cursory perusal of the Old Testament, that frequent intimations of a remarkable personage coming from the Jewish nation have been maintained. The expectation of a Messiah, the idea of a distinguished personage proceeding from Judea, seems to have surrounded nations. Some of the prophecies on which this opinion was founded, are the promise of "the seed of the woman," and "the seed of the woman."

phetic weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, from the time of the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem, and while the second temple was yet standing.

3. The place of his birth, and the family from which he was to descend, were also explicitly mentioned in prophecy. From the evangelical history, and from the acknowledgment of the Jews, it is evident that they well knew that the Messiah was to be born at Bethlehem, and to be of the family of David.

4. Things of an apparently contradictory nature are predicted concerning the Messiah. At one time he is represented as a king and conqueror, whose dominion would be co-extensive with the earth, and flourish in righteousness and peace for ever; at another he is exhibited as one "despised and rejected; a man of sorrow and grief; as wounded and bruised;—as cut off out of the land of the living; and as pouring out his soul unto death." These apparently irreconcilable characters led the Jews at one time to entertain the opinion that two Messiahs were predicted, the one a triumphant conqueror, the other a persecuted and patient sufferer. But however great the apparent inconsistency, there is an exact accomplishment of both characters in Jesus of Nazareth. And certainly the same cannot be said of any other person who ever lived.

5. It is predicted of the Messiah, that he should be a light to the Gentiles; and that under his administration, the face of the world should be changed, and that peace and righteousness should prevail. *Although this prophecy is only in part fulfilled, yet so much has been accomplished in the call of numerous Gentile nations to the standard of the Messiah*

sin and transgression. "Thou shalt make an offering for sin."

For the fulfilling of these predictions, I refer to the New Testament.

That there is a remarkable coincidence the language of the Prophets and the history of the Evangelists, cannot be denied, however it is accounted for. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is a counterpart in the sufferings and death of the Messiah, which has forced conviction on the minds of unbelievers.

But there are also many particular circumstances foretold respecting the Messiah, which it may be proper briefly to mention. His name, John the Baptist, is predicted by Isaiah and Malachi. His miracles, his uncomplaining manner, and tranquil submission, under cruel sufferings, are foretold by Isaiah. His riding on an ass, and a colt, the

the fulfillment of which was wonderful, since the legs of both those crucified with him were broken.

Isaiah foretold, that he should make his *grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death*, which was literally accomplished, when Jesus Christ was suspended on the cross between two thieves; and when he was taken down from the cross by a rich man, and buried by him in his own new tomb.

The most of these particulars were fulfilled by the free actions of the enemies of Jesus, who had no idea that they were fulfilling any divine prophecy. It is impossible that so many circumstances, literally predicted, should have been fulfilled by a mere fortuitous concurrence.

The truth is, the whole ritual law is a prophecy of Jesus. To him the whole Old Testament dispensation had reference. The law, the Psalms, and the prophets, all testify of him. As said the angel to St. John, "THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS, IS THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY."

Christ himself delivered, while upon earth, many clear and remarkable prophecies. Most of his parables have a prophetic character, and in a striking manner represented the Gospel, the rejection of the Jews and calling of the Gentiles, and the future condition of the church. He also foretold, in express words, the treatment which his followers should receive in the world; the treachery of Judas Iscariot; the conduct of Peter, in denying him three times in one night; and the particular circumstances and exact manner of his own death; and also his resurrection on the third day. But I must pass over all these at present, and confine my attention to that *astonishing prophecy*, which Jesus delivered to his disciples on Mount Olivet, concerning the utter destruc-

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them.

1. The signs and precursors of this event were to be false Christs ;—seditions and wars ;—famines, pestilences, earthquakes, and extraordinary appearances in the heavens ;—the persecution of Christians ;—the apostacy of professors ;—and the great want of charity, and depravation of morals among the people.

2. The circumstances of this tremendous judgment of heaven, are such as these :—the event should occur before the existing generation had completely passed away :—that it should be brought on by a war waged against the Jews, by a heathen nation, bearing idolatrous ensigns ;—that Jerusalem should be utterly destroyed, and the temple so completely demolished, that one stone of that sacred edifice should not be left on another :—that multitudes should perish by the sword :—that great numbers should be carried away captives :—that the distress should exceed any thing which had ever occurred in the world ;—and that the divine wrath should be manifest in all these calamities, as it is called, *the day of vengeance*, and it is said, that there should be *wrath against the people*.

3. The consequences of the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem, as predicted by Christ, were to be the dispersion of the Jews through all the nations ;—the total overthrow of the Jewish commonwealth, which is expressed by the prophetic symbols of *the sun being darkened, the moon not giving her light, and the stars falling from heaven* ;—the rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles ;—the rising of other false prophets, and false Messiahs ;—the extent and continuance of these judgments on the Jewish nation ; with some intimation of their restoration. The escape of the Christians from these calamities is also foretold, and directions given for their flight ; and on their account, it is promised the



accomplished ; and we seems to have been ordered that the history of the se. prophecy was fulfilled, sh. who was not a Christian ness of the facts which he Jewish historian, Josephu respectability, and of gre Christianity.

1. In regard of false C. phesy speaks so emphatica torian just mentioned, tha drew multitudes after them mising to show them sign. whom became deranged, ar by Felix, the procurator. was that Egyptian, spoken Apostles, who drew multitu him to M-

There were also, at this time, great commotions, and horrible seditions and wars, in various places ; as at Cesarea, Alexandria, and Babylonia. There were great contentions between the Jews and Samaritans ; and also between the Jews and people of other nations, who dwelt in the same cities with them. Both Josephus and Philo give a particular account of these disturbances, in which multitudes of people were slain.

Famines, pestilences, and earthquakes, are mentioned by Suetonius, by several profane historians who are cited by Eusebius, by Josephus, by Tacitus, and by Seneca.

That prodigies were frequent, is expressly asserted by Josephus and Tacitus. The former declares that a star hung over the city like a sword, for a whole year ;—that at the ninth hour of the night, a bright light shone round the altar and the temple, so that for the space of half an hour it appeared to be bright day ;—that the eastern gate of the temple, which it required twenty men to shut, and which was fastened by strong bars, and bolts, opened of its own accord ;—that before sun-set, there was seen, in the clouds, the appearance of chariots and armies fighting ;—that at the feast of Pentecost, while the priests were going into the inner temple, a voice was heard, as of a multitude saying, *Let us depart hence*. And what affected the people more than anything else, was, that four years before the war began, a countryman came to Jerusalem, at the feast of Tabernacles, and ran up and down, crying day and night, “ A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the temple. Wo ! wo ! to Jerusalem ! ” It was in vain that by stripes and torture the magistrates attempted to restrain him : he continued crying, especially at the public festivals, for seven

...ing of arms was observed ; and from the clouds illuminated the top of the inner temple were suddenly th  
a voice more than human was heard  
gods are departing : and at the same  
of their departure was perceived.”  
what judgment they please of these  
one thing is certain, that the mind  
about this time much agitated and ter  
appeared to them to be prodigies. *1*  
*ful sights and great signs from heaven.*

2. The circumstances accompan  
and capture of the city, were as exac  
the preceding signs. *The abominatio*  
spoken of by Daniel the prophet, wa  
than the Roman armies, whose ensign  
perched upon a spear ; which ensigns  
ped as divinities. These stood where  
when they were at the city.

what with intestine feuds and tumults ; and what with famine and pestilence, the sufferings which they endured cannot now be conceived. No such distress was ever experienced by any people, before or since.

Jerusalem was hemmed in on all sides, by the besieging army, and notwithstanding the great strength of its fortifications, was taken. Although Titus had given express orders, that the temple should be preserved ; yet the mouth of the Lord had declared that it should be otherwise ; and accordingly it was burnt to the ground, and the very foundation dug up by the soldiers, with the hope of finding hidden treasures. After the city had been destroyed, Titus ordered the whole space to be levelled like a field ; so that a person approaching the place would hardly suspect that it had ever been inhabited.

The number slain in the war has already been mentioned ; to which we may now add, that the captives amounted to ninety-seven thousand. Josephus, in relating these events, adopts a language remarkably similar to that used by Christ, in the prophecy. "The calamities of all people," says he, "from the creation of the world, if they be compared with those suffered by the Jews, will be found to be far surpassed by them." The words of Christ are ; *there shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time ; no, nor ever shall be.*

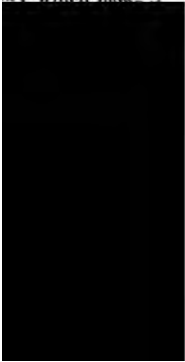
That these unparalleled calamities proceeded from the vengeance of heaven, against a people whose iniquities were full, was not only acknowledged by Josephus, but by Titus, the Roman general. After taking a survey of the city, the height of the towers and walls, the magnitude of the stones, and the strength of the bands by which they were held together, he broke out into the following exclamation

## OF THE

brought this war to  
drew out the Jews  
hat could the hands  
l, against such towers  
e crowned, after the  
not the author of this  
*God against the Jews,*  
s hands."

of this catastrophe  
as accurately fulfill-  
he Jews, who sur-  
orld, in which con-  
7. The Christians,  
of their Lord, es-  
ge. Jerusalem was  
nd continues to be

n, but not precisely  
ia; which part



providentially hindered, in his attempt; Nazianzen and Chrysostom, among the Greeks; Ambrose, and Ruffin among the Latins; all of whom flourished at the very time when this wonderful event occurred. Theodoret, Socrates, Sozomen, and Philostorgius, respectable historians, recorded it within fifty years after the event; and while the eye witnesses of the fact were still surviving.\* That part of the prophecy which relates to the restoration of the Jews remains to be accomplished, and we hope the accomplishment is not far distant. When this event shall take place, the evidence from this prophecy will be complete, and almost irresistible. This shall occur when *the times of the Gentiles shall be fulfilled*. The circumstances of this glorious event are more particularly described by Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, chap. xi. "If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness? for I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved." The preaching of the Gospel to all nations has been considered in another place.

After this concise review of some remarkable prophecies contained in the Bible, is there any one who can persuade himself, that all these coincidences are accidental; or that the whole is a cunningly devised fable? That man must indeed be blind, who cannot see *this LIGHT which shineth in a dark place:—this SURE WORD OF PROPHECY, which holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

\* See Whitby's General Preface to the New Testament.

**AND DEGREE OF EVIDENCE AS C  
AND NO OTHER MIRACLES ARE AS  
ED, AS THOSE RECORDED IN THE E**

HAVING given a brief view of the ex  
of Christianity, it is now proper to  
any system of religion, ancient or mo  
supported by evidence ; and whethe  
have testimony in their favour, as sat  
by which the miracles of the Gospel a

The usual declamation of infidel  
subject, is calculated to make the im  
suspicious readers, that all religions a  
origin ; that they all lay claim to mi  
communications ; and that all stand  
footing. But when we descend to pe  
quire, what religions, that now exist,  
profess to rest their claims on well a  
and the establishment of

free from ambiguity as to furnish evidence, that the knowledge of futurity was possessed ? It is easy to pretend to divine revelation. It is not disputed, that many impostors have appeared in the world, as well as many deluded fanatics. But the reason why all their claims and pretensions may with propriety be rejected, is, that they were not able to exhibit any satisfactory evidence, that they were commissioned from heaven, to instruct mankind in religion.

In this we are all agreed. Of what use therefore, can it be, to bring up these impostures and delusions, when the evidences of the Christian religion are under consideration ? Can it be a reason for rejecting a religion which comes well attested, that there have been innumerable false pretensions to divine revelation ? Must miracles, supported by abundant testimony, be discredited, because there have been reports of prodigies and miracles which have no evidence ? And because heathen oracles have given answers to inquiries respecting future events, dark, indeterminate, and designedly ambiguous ; shall we place no confidence in numerous authentic prophecies, long ago committed to writing, which have been most exactly and wonderfully accomplished ?

It is alleged, that the early history of all ancient nations is fabulous, and abounds in stories of incredible prodigies ; and hence it is inferred, that the miracles of the Old and New Testaments should be considered in the same light. To which it may be replied, that this general consent of nations, that miracles have existed, is favourable to the opinion that true miracles have at some time occurred. *It may again be observed, that the history of Moses, which is more than a thousand years older than any profane history, has every evidence of being a true*



when it would have been more common  
belief in miracles which had no  
monopoly, than in the Augustan and  
Not only did learning flourish; but  
this period, a general tendency to  
atheism. There can evidently, therefore,  
reference unfavourable to Christianity  
the belief of unfounded stories of miracles  
in the dark ages of antiquity. To  
the prevalence of false accounts of miracles  
be to produce caution, and careful  
the evidence of every report of miracles  
dictates, that truth and falsehood  
be confounded. Let every fact be  
test of a rigid scrutiny, and let it  
be as cordingly as it is supported or unsupported  
monopoly. If the miracles or the Biblical  
evidence than the prodigies of the

with vague declamations on the credulity of man, and the many fabulous stories which have been circulated and believed. But what has this to do with the question? We admit all this, and maintain that it does not furnish the semblance of an argument against the truth of the well attested facts recorded by the Evangelists. Because there is much falsehood in the world, there is no such thing as truth? It would be just as reasonable to conclude, that, because many men have been convicted of falsehood, there were no persons of veracity in the world; or that because there were many knaves, all pretensions to honesty were unfounded.

The Mohammedan religion is frequently brought forward by the enemies of revelation, with an air of confidence, as though the pretensions and success of that impostor, would derogate from the evidences of Christianity. It is expedient, therefore, to bring this subject under a particular examination. And here, let it be observed, that we do not reject any thing, respecting the origin and progress of this religion, which has been transmitted to us by competent and credible witnesses. We admit, that Mohammed existed, and was the founder of a new sect; and that from a small beginning his religion spread with astonishing rapidity over the fairest portion of the globe. We admit also, that he was the author of the Koran, which he composed, from time to time, probably with the aid of some one or two other persons. Moreover, it is admitted, that he was an extraordinary man, and prosecuted the bold scheme which he had projected, with uncommon perseverance and address. Neither are we disposed to deny, that the Koran contains many sublime passages, relative to God and his perfections, and many sound

and salutary precepts of morality. That the language is elegant, and a standard of purity in the Arabic tongue, has been asserted by all Mohammedan writers, and conceded by many learned Christians. But as to his pretended revelations, there is no external evidence whatever that they were real; and there is an overwhelming weight of internal evidence that they were not from God.

To bring this subject fairly before us, let the following considerations be impartially weighed.

1. The pretensions of Mohammed were supported by no miracles, or prophecies. He was often called upon by his opposers to confirm his mission by this decisive proof; but he always declined making the attempt; and resorted to various excuses and subterfuges. In the Koran, God is introduced as saying, "Nothing hindered us from sending thee with miracles, except that the former nations had

suppose, surely Mohammed would have recourse to this measure, during the period, that he was so pressed and teased by his enemies, with a demand, for this very evidence. But he had too much cunning to venture upon an expedient so dangerous : his opposers would quickly have detected and exposed the cheat. At length, however, he so far yielded to the demand of his enemies, as to publish one of the most extravagant stories which ever entered into the imagination of man ; and solemnly swore that every word of it was true. I refer to his night journey to Jerusalem, and thence to heaven, under the guidance of the angel Gabriel. As this story may afford some amusement to the reader, I will subjoin in a note the substance of it, omitting those particulars which are most ridiculous and extravagant.\*

This marvellous story, however, had well nigh ruined his cause. His enemies treated it with deserved ridicule and scorn ; and a number of his followers forsook him from that time. In fact, it rendered his further continuance at Mecca entirely inexpedient ; and having before despatched some of his disciples to Medina, he betook himself, with his followers, to that city, where he met with a more cordial reception, than in his native place.

The followers of Mohammed, hundreds of years after his death, related many miracles, which they pretended that he performed : but their report is not only unsupported by testimony, but is in direct contradiction to the Koran, where he repeatedly disclaims all pretensions to miraculous powers. And the miracles which they ascribe to him, while they are marvellous enough, are of that trifling and ludi-

\* See Note A.

it appears, then, that Mohammed: evidence whatever, but the declaratio postor. It is impossible, therefore, tha should be placed in a more favourable p than in comparision with the religion of The one, as we have seen, rests on miracles ; the other does not exhibit the proof that it was derived from heaven.

2. It is fair to compare the moral cha respective founders of these two religions. we have as perfect a contrast as history Jesus Christ was holy, harmless, undefile ate from sinners. His life was pure, with His most bitter enemies could find no fa He exhibited, through life, the most perf of disinterested zeal, pure benevolence, an ed humility, which the world ever saw. was an ambitious, licentious, cruel, and His life was stained

3. The Koran itself can never bear a comparison with the New Testament in the view of any impartial person. It is a confused and incongruous heap, of sublime sentiments, moral precepts, positive institutions, extravagant and ridiculous stories and manifest lies and contradictions. Mohammed himself acknowledged that it contained many contradictions ; but he accounted for this fact, by alleging, that what had been communicated to him in one chapter, was repealed in a subsequent one, and so he charges this inconsistency to his Maker. The number of abrogated passages is so great, that a mussulman cannot be easily confuted by proving the falsehood of any declaration in the Koran, for he will have recourse to his doctrine of *abrogation*. There is nothing in this book which cannot easily be accounted for, nothing above the capacity of impostors to accomplish. It is artfully accommodated to the religions of Arabia prevalent at the time. It gives encouragement to the strongest and most vicious passions of human nature, encourages ambition, despotism, revenge, and offensive war ; opens wide the door to licentiousness, and holds out such rewards and punishments as are calculated to make an impression on the minds of wicked men. It discourages, and indeed forbids all free inquiry, and all discussion of the doctrines which it contains. Whatever is excellent in the Koran, is an imitation of the Bible ; but wherever the author follows his own judgment, or indulges his own imagination, we find falsehood, impiety, or ridiculous absurdity.

4. The means by which the religion of Mohammed was propagated, were entirely different from

*See Ryan's History of the Effects of Religion on Mankind.*

again a perfect contrast. Mohammed  
tempt at first to propagate his relig  
and artifice; and these efforts h  
twelve years, but with very small  
end of three years he had gained no  
teen disciples; at the end of seven  
ers amounted to little more than eig  
end of twelve years, when he fled  
number was very inconsiderable.  
as there can be a fair comparison b  
gress of Christianity and Mohamme  
during the time that Mohammed em  
and persuasion alone, there is no res  
progress of Christianity was like the  
shineth from one part of heaven to th  
ing in a few years, not only without  
and power, but in direct opposition  
out the whole Roman empire and

He began by attacking mercantile caravans, and as his force increased, went on to conquer the petty kingdoms, into which Arabia was then divided.\* Sometimes he put all the prisoners to death, and at other times, sold them into slavery. At first, the order was to massacre every creature that refused to embrace his religion ; but he became more lenient afterwards, especially to Jews and Christians. The alternative was, " The Koran, death, or tribute."

But it is a great mistake to suppose, that the conquests of Mohammed, himself, were very extensive. The fact is, that he never during his life, extended his dominion beyond the limits of Arabia ; except that he overran one or two inconsiderable provinces of Syria. It was by the Caliphs, his successors, that so great a part of Asia and Egypt were brought into subjection. But what is there remarkable in these successes, more than those of other great conquerors ? Surely, the propagation of Mohammedanism, by the sword, however rapid or extensive, can never bear any comparison with that of Christianity, by the mere force of truth, under the blessing of heaven.

5. The tendency and effects of Mohammedanism, when compared with the tendency and effects of Christianity, serve to exhibit the latter in a very favourable light. The Christian religion has been a rich blessing to every country which has embraced it ; and its salutary effects have born proportion to the care which has been taken to inculcate its genuine principles, and the cordiality with which its doctrines have been embraced. If we cast our eyes over the map of the world, and inquire what nations are truly

\* See Prideaux's *Life of Mahomet*.



specy, and wanted to its proper place.  
Where is the education of youth most  
pursued? Where are the brightest ex-  
emplars of benevolence: and where do men enjoy  
happiness? I say, if we were called upon to  
visit those countries, in which these advantages  
are highly enjoyed, every one of them would  
be a Christian country; and the superiority enjoyed  
over the others, would be found to be in  
proportion to the practical influence of  
Christianity.

On the contrary, if we take a survey of  
the most salubrious regions, possessed by Mahometans,  
we behold a wide-spread desolation. The  
most fertile parts of the globe, where arts, literature, and  
science formerly most flourished, are now blighted.  
The most noble institution has sunk into oblivion,  
and the iron sceptre of despotism extends its  
power over these ill-fated regions, and all the tranquillity  
ever enjoyed is lost.

Koran, is to fight for the propagation of the faith, and the highest rewards are promised to those who die in battle. There is no doubt, but that the principles of the Koran greatly contributed to the conquests of the Saracens, by divesting them of all fear of death, and inspiring them with an assurance of being admitted into a sensual paradise, if it should be their fate to be slain in battle. "The sword," said he, "is the key of heaven and hell; a drop of blood shed in the cause of God, a night spent under arms, is of more avail, than two months of fasting and prayer. Whosoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven. At the day of judgment, his wounds shall be resplendent as vermilion, and odoriferous as musk; and the loss of his limbs shall be replaced by the wings of angels and cherubims." But when they had finished their conquests, and a state of peace succeeded their long and bloody wars, they sunk into torpid indolence and stupidity. While other nations have been making rapid improvements in all the arts, they have remained stationary: or rather have been continually going backward. They have derived no advantages from the revival of letters, the invention of printing, or the improvement in the arts and sciences. The people who have been subjected to their despotism without adopting their religion, are kept in the most degrading subjection.

At present,\* the Greeks are making noble exertions to break the cruel yoke, which has oppressed them, and though unsupported by Christian nations, have succeeded in expelling the Turks from a large portion of their country. God grant them success, and give them wisdom to make a good use of their

\* A. D. 1825.

and in the sides to the Israelites, will soon bring  
end this horrible despotism, which has been f  
on a vile imposture. The signs of the tim  
strong indications, that the Mohammedan pow  
shortly be subverted. But it is not for us "t  
the times and the seasons, which the Father  
put in his own power."

The only thing further, necessary to be co  
ed, in this chapter, is, the miracles which hav  
brought forward as a counterpoise to the mir  
Christ and his apostles. This is an old strat  
at least as early as the second century, wh  
Philostratus, at the request of Julia Augusta,  
the emperor Severus, wrote a history, or rat  
mance, of Apollonius, of Tyana, a town in '   
docia. This Apollonius was nearly conten  
with Jesus Christ; but whether he was a p  
pher, or a conjurer cannot now be ascertain

ly evident from the similarity of many of the miracles ascribed to him, to facts recorded in the Gospels, and which are manifestly borrowed from the evangelical history. He is made to raise the dead, to cast out demons, and to rise from the dead himself. In one instance the very words of the demons expelled by Jesus Christ, as recorded by St. Luke, "*Art thou come to torment us before the time,*" are put into the mouth of a demon said to be cast out by Apollonius. But in addition to these miracles, his biographer pretends that he saw beasts with a human head and lion's body;—women half white and half black, together with phoenixes, griffins, dragons, and similar fabulous monsters.

In the fourth century, Hierocles, a bitter enemy of Christianity, instituted a comparison between Jesus and Apollonius, in which, after considering their miracles, he gives the preference to the latter. This book was answered by Eusebius, from whose work only, we can now learn how Hierocles treated the subject, as the book of the latter is not extant. The only conclusion which can be deduced from this history of Apollonius, is, that the miracles of Christ were so firmly believed in the second century, and were attended by such testimony, that the enemies of Christianity could not deny the facts, and therefore resorted to the expedient of circulating stories of equal miracles performed by another.

Modern infidels have not been ashamed to resort to the same stale device. Mr. Hume has taken much pains to bring forward a great array of evidence, in favour of certain miracles, in which he has no faith, with the view of discrediting the truth of Christianity. These have been so fully and satisfactorily considered by Dr. Douglass, Bishop of Salisbury, in his

principles, by which we may distinguish  
and false miracles ; for which I am in-  
pally, to the author of the CRITERION,  
ed.

1. The nature of the facts should be  
ed, whether they are miraculous.  
which supports a fact may be sufficient  
may have been brought about by nature.

The miracles of Jesus Christ were  
was no room for doubt respecting the  
character ; but a great part of those  
others, which have received the best a-  
of such a nature, that they may readily  
for, without supposing any divine inter-  
case of the man diseased in his eyes, sa-  
cured by Vespasian's rubbing his hand  
the lame man cured by a touch of the  
were, no doubt impositions practised

pared their subjects : and the emperor was flattered with the honour of being selected by their god, to work a miracle. How often do beggars in the street impose upon many, by pretending to be blind and lame ? The high encomiums which Mr. Hume bestows on the historian Tacitus, in order to set off the testimony to the best advantage, can have no weight here ; for he only related what he had heard from others, and showed pretty evidently that he did not credit the story himself.

The same may be said, respecting the man spoken of by Cardinal de Retz, at Saragossa, who was represented as having been seen without a leg, but obtained one by rubbing the stump with holy oil. The Cardinal had no other evidence of his having ever been maimed, than the suspicious report of the canons of the Church ; and he took no pains to ascertain, whether the leg, which he had obtained, was really flesh and blood, or an artificial limb.

A great part of the cures said to have been performed at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, were proved, upon examination, to be mere pretences ; and those which were real, may easily be accounted for from the influence of a heated imagination and enthusiastic feelings ; especially, since we have seen the wonderful effects of animal magnetism and metallic tractors.\*

2. A second consideration of great weight is, that in true miracles we can trace the testimony to the very time when the facts are said to have occurred, but in false miracles, the report of the facts originates a long time afterwards, as in the case of Apollonius ; and as in the case of the miracles ascribed to Mohammed by Abulfeda and Al-Janabbi ; and

\* See Note B.

...in the place, and among the people they are said to have been performed. remarkably the fact, in regard to the miracle in the Bible, to require any proof. But many miracles are rendered suspicious by the circumstance that they were first reported and believed in a place, far from that in which they were said to have been wrought. The miracles ascribed by the Romanists to Francis Xavier, are contrary to both the rules last mentioned. In all the time while a Missionary in the East, he never performed any miracles had been wrought, and a reputation who gave some account of his labours many years after his death, not only is silent about miracles, but confesses, that no miracles were performed among the Indians. These miracles are said to be performed in the remote parts of India and Japan, but the report of them was first in Europe. Almost all the miracles...

when they are exhibited by persons in power, who prevent all examination, and put what face they please on facts, they may well be reckoned suspicious. Now, the cures at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, were performed in these circumstances. The Jansenists were not in power, and their enemies not only had the opportunity to examine into the facts, but actually did so, with the utmost diligence. We have reason to believe, therefore, that we have now a true report of the occurrences. The defect of these miracles is in their nature, not in their evidence.

But in most cases, the miracles which have been reported, took place, when there was no opportunity of examining into the facts; when the people were pleased to be confirmed in their favourite opinions; or, when the ruling powers had some particular end to answer.\*

But supposing these miracles to be ever so well attested, I do not perceive how the evidence of divine revelation can be affected by them; for if it could be made to appear, that these were supported by testimony, as strong as that which can be adduced in favour of the miracles of the New Testament, the only fair conclusion is, that in consistency, they who believe in Christianity should admit them to be true; but what then? Would it follow, because miracles had been wrought on some rare occasions, different from those recorded in the Bible, that therefore, these were of no validity as evidence of divine revelation? Would not the fact that other miracles had been wrought, rather confirm our belief in those which were performed with so important a design. Mr. Hume does, indeed, artfully insinuate, that the various

\* On this whole subject, see Douglass's Criterion.



particulars . . .  
to Christianity. If they had actually  
would not in the least disparage the evidence  
facts recorded in the New Testament.  
cially, it is a strange conceit, that miracles  
within the bosom of the Christian Church  
furnish any proof against Christianity.

It is however, no part of the object to  
bring forward such an array of testimony,  
of certain miracles, to prove that such facts  
occurred. This is diametrically opposite  
purpose. Their design is to discredit all  
favour of miracles, by showing, that facts  
alleged to be false, have evidence as strong  
which revealed religion rests. But they  
ly failed in the attempt, as we have shown  
they had succeeded in adducing as strong  
for other miracles, then we would readily  
truth, and that in perfect consistency with

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE BIBLE CONTAINS INTERNAL EVIDENCE  
THAT ITS ORIGIN IS DIVINE.

As the Old and New Testaments are intimately connected, and form parts of the same system, it is unnecessary to make any distinction between them, in considering this branch of the evidence of divine revelation.

A late writer,\* of great eminence and popularity, has represented this species of evidence as unsatisfactory, as not capable of being so treated as to produce conviction in the minds of philosophical infidels, and as opening a door to their most specious objections to Christianity. But, certainly, this is not the most effectual method of supporting the credit of the Scriptures. Another popular writer† has gone to the other extreme, and seems to set little value on the external evidences of Christianity, while he exhibits the internal, in a light so strong, that his argument assumes the appearance of demonstration.

But these two species of evidence, though distinct, are harmonious, and strengthen each other. There is, therefore, no propriety in disparaging the one, for the purpose of enhancing the value of the other. I believe the fact is, however, that more instances have occurred of sceptical men being convinced of the truth of Christianity, by the internal, than the external evidences. It is the misfortune of most in-

\* Dr. Chalmers,

† Soame Jenyns.

fidels, that they have no intimate acquaintance with the Bible ; and even many of those who have taken to write against it, appear never to have taken with any other view, than to find some gross objection.

No doubt, it is necessary to come to the consideration of this species of evidence, with a candid disposition. If reason be permitted to assume the seat of judgment, and to undertake to decide what a revelation ought to contain ; in what manner, and with what degree of clearness should be communicated ; whether it should be unfolded perfectly at once, or gradually unfolded ; and from the beginning, it should be universal. The result of an examination of the contents of the Bible, conducted on such principles, will be satisfactory ; and insuperable objections will be removed at every step in the progress. It was wise in our predecessors, to endeavour to discourage such a

deal of controversy, by proving that all this is superfluous and uncalled for.' I am constrained to think, that instead of aiding the cause of Christianity, the excellent author has attempted to take away one of its firmest props. The internal evidence of revelation is analogous to the evidence of the being and perfections of God, from the works of creation : and the same mode of reasoning which the deist adopts, relative to the doctrines and institutions of the Bible, the atheist may adopt, with equal force, against the existence of a God. If men will be so presumptuous as to determine, that if God makes a world, he will form it according to their idea of fitness, and that the apparent imperfections and incomprehensibilities in the material universe, could never have proceeded from a Being of infinite perfection, atheism must follow of course. But, if notwithstanding all these apparent evils and obscurities, there is in the structure of the world, the most convincing evidence of the existence of an all-wise and all-powerful Being ; why may we not expect to find the same kind of evidence impressed on a revelation from God ? Upon Dr. Chalmers' principles, we ought to depend simply on historical testimony, for the fact, that God created this world ; and ' disclaim all support' from what may, without impropriety, be termed the internal evidence of the existence of God, derived from the contemplation of the work itself. The truth, however, is, that every thing which proceeds from God, whatever difficulties or obscurities accompany it, will contain and exhibit the impress of his character. As this is resplendently visible in the heavens and the earth, it is reasonable to think, that it will not be less manifest in his word. If the truths contained in a revelation be worthy of God, they will be stamped

with his image ; and if this can be, in a  
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fact, this is without being reduced to the  
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learning, which plain labouring Christians  
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evidence is within their reach ; it acts directly  
on their minds, whenever they read or hear  
the word of God. The belief of common  
Christians, is not necessarily founded in the  
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dence. And as there is a faith which is  
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truth to the constitution of the human mind, in its astonishing power of penetrating and searching the heart, and affecting the conscience. There is a sublime sanctity in the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel; a devotional and heavenly spirit, pervading the Scriptures; a purity and holy tendency, which cannot but be felt by the serious reader of the word of God; and a power to soothe and comfort the sorrowful mind; all which qualities may be perceived, and will have their effect, but cannot be embodied and presented, with their full force in the form of argument. But, although this evidence, from the nature of the case, cannot be exhibited in its entire body, to any but those who study the Scriptures, and meditate on their truths day and night, yet it is possible to select some prominent points, and present them to the reader in such a light, as to produce a salutary impression. This is what will now be briefly attempted in the following remarks, which might without difficulty be greatly enlarged.

1. The Scriptures speak of God and his attributes, in a way which accords with what right reason would lead us to expect, in a divine revelation. He is uniformly represented in the Bible as *ONE*, and as a Being of infinite perfection; as eternal—omnipotent—omniscient—omnipresent—and immutable. And it is truly remarkable, that these correct and sublime views of theology were entertained by those who possessed the Scriptures, when all other nations had fallen into the grossest polytheism, and most degrading idolatry. Other nations were more powerful, and greatly excelled the Israelites in human learning; but in the knowledge of *God*, all were in thick darkness, whilst this people enjoyed the light of truth. Learned men and philo

ophers arose in different countries, and obtained celebrity on account of their theories, but they effected no change in the popular opinions; indeed they could not enlighten others, when they were destitute of the light of truth themselves. However daring they may deride and scoff at the Bible, it is a fact capable of the clearest proof, that had it not been for the Scriptures, there would not at this time, be such a thing as pure theism upon earth. There is not in the world, an individual who believes in one infinitely perfect God, whose knowledge of this truth may not be traced directly, or indirectly, to the Bible.

How can it be accounted for, that the true theology should be found accompanying the Scriptures in all ages, while it was lost every where else, unless we admit that they are a revelation from God? If we have knowledge of the true God, as received by the Jews, was the discovery of science, when was it that

man mind, and to employ language expressive of human acts and feelings : for all other language would be unintelligible. The necessity of this accommodation extends much further than many seem to suppose : it exists not only in relation to words, which, taken literally, convey the idea of bodily members and human passions, but also in regard to those which express the operations of will and intellect. This mode of speaking, therefore, instead of being an objection against the Bible, is an argument of the wisdom of its Author, who has spoken to man in the only way in which he could be understood.

Again, it is seen by the most cursory reader, that truth is not taught in the Bible in a scientific or systematic order. We have here no profound metaphysical disquisitions ; no discussion of philosophical principles ; no array of artificial dialectics ; and no systematic arrangement of the subjects treated. In all this, there may be great wisdom, and whether we can see the reason or not, the objection to revelation, on this ground, is not greater than the one which may be made to the natural world, because the materials for building, which it contains, are not found erected into houses ; and because all its fields and forests are not placed in the order of an artificial garden, or regular orchard.

The method of speaking of God in the sacred Scriptures, is at once most simple and sublime. Few words are employed, but these are most significant. When Moses wished to receive an appropriate name which he might mention to Pharaoh, to whom he was sent, he was directed to say, *I AM THAT I AM* hath sent me. And when, on another occasion, the name of the Most High was declared to Moses, it was in the following remarkable words, *THE LORD,*



would be received as a proof, that these books were inspired, we could add of passages of this description ; but we lay any undue stress on the argument this source.

The glory of the Scriptures is, in which they contain of the moral attributes. These are manifested with but a feeble works of creation, but in the Bible the transcendant lustre. It would by no means with the intended brevity of this work to go into detail on this subject, but I must indulge the reader, while I endeavour to bring distinctly into view, the accounts which give us of the HOLINESS and the GOODNESS.

These two attributes are stamped on the Bible, and form its grand character of no importance, whether we consider

eternal sign and emblem of profound reverence is required in them who worship Him; and when he manifests himself with more than usual clearness, the holiest men are overwhelmed, and become as dead men, under a sense of their own vileness. And not only so, but even the heavenly hosts, who are free from every stain of sin, seem to be overwhelmed with the view of the HOLINESS of God. They not only cry to one another, as they worship around his august throne, HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, but they are represented as falling prostrate at his feet, and veiling their faces in token of profound veneration. All those passages of Scripture, which speak of the WRATH, the INDIGNATION, the FURY, the JEALOUSY, or the ANGER, of the Almighty, are no more than strong expressions of his infinite holiness. All his severe judgments and threatenings; all the misery which he ever inflicts on his creatures in this world or the next; and above all, the intense and ineffable sufferings of Christ, are exhibitions of the holiness of God.

Now, if there be a God, he must be holy; and if he make a revelation of himself, it will be marked with this impress of character. But wicked men would never have made this attribute so prominent; they would rather have been disposed to keep it entirely out of view. There is no truth more evident to the attentive observer of human nature, than that men do not naturally love holiness, although they are obliged to acknowledge its worth. This, I believe, is the true reason, why the Scriptures, although they contain the highest excellence in composition, both in prose and poetry, of which a good taste cannot be insensible, are neglected by literary men, or rather *studiously avoided*. A mere fragment of any other book, if it could claim an equal antiquity with the

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**HOLINESS.**

The **GOODNESS** of **GOD**, or that be  
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creatures who had forfeited all claim to any kindness. It is the bestowing of pardon and salvation on those, who are condemned to death by the righteous law of God ; and this without showing himself less displeased with their sins than if he had punished them for ever. This is the view of divine goodness which is peculiar to the Bible. Reason could not have formed a conjecture concerning it. It is the development of a trait in the divine character, before unknown. To reveal the mercy of God may with truth be said to be the principal object of the Bible. But our idea of this divine goodness is very imperfect, until we learn in what way it was manifested. No words can express this so well as those of Christ himself, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

To many, perhaps, it will appear, that this love is so extraordinary, that it rather forms an objection against the Bible, than an argument in its favour. If the wonderful and unparalleled nature of any thing were an objection to it, then I acknowledge that there would be some ground for this opinion. But what is there which is not full of wonders, when we come to contemplate it attentively ? It is wonderful that there should exist such a creature as man, or such a body of light as the sun ; but shall we therefore refuse to believe in their existence ? To come nearer to the subject, what is there in the character of God or his works, which is not calculated to fill the mind with surpassing wonder ! His eternity, his omniscience, his omnipresence, his creating power and universal providence are so wonderful, that we are at a loss to say which is most wonderful : or

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tion, any more than we can to the possibility of creatures still increasing in magnitude above us. In this respect, as in others, we stand between two infinities, the great and the small, if I may so speak. A single drop of liquid contains myriads of perfectly organized creatures; and who knows but every particle of the blood of these invisible animalcules may contain other worlds of beings still more minute, without it being possible for us to fix any limit to the diminution in the size of creatures.

But to return, unless it can be shown that such love as that exhibited in the Gospel, is impossible, which will not be pretended, or that it is repugnant to the moral attributes of God, its wonderful nature can never be properly used as an argument against its existence. Rather it should be argued, the more wonderful, the more like God; the more wonderful, if no appearance of human weakness accompany it, the more unlikely to be the invention of man.

And here, I would mention an idea, which if correct, will shed light on this subject, namely, that wonder is congenial to the constitution of our minds. The soul of man never enjoys more elevated emotions and more exalted pleasure, than in the contemplation of objects so great and vast, as to be perfectly incomprehensible. This is the foundation of that perpetual adoration which occupies the inhabitants of heaven. An incomprehensible God is the object of contemplation and wonder to every creature.

2. The account which the Bible gives of the origin and character of man, accords very exactly with reason and experience.

*Indeed, this is the only source of our knowledge respecting the circumstances in which man was placed, when he came from the hand of his Creator.*



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source. Indeed the origin of language itself, concerning which philosophers have disputed so much, is very evident from the history of Moses. Many learned men have thought, that alphabetical writing took its rise from the writing of the decalogue, by the finger of God, upon the tables of stone ; and I believe that it would be found very difficult to prove, by any authentic documents, that this art existed before. Be this as it may, it must be admitted that the earliest specimen of alphabetical writing now extant, is contained in the Bible.

To these particulars it may be added, that we have an account in the Bible of those nations and people, concerning whom the earliest profane historians treat, long before their histories commence : and when history comes down to that period when the affairs of nations are described by others, it receives ample corroboration from their narratives, as well as gives great light to enable us to understand many things which they have imperfectly recorded.

But the account which the Bible gives of the moral condition of man, is that which is now most to our purpose. In all ages and circumstances, the human race are represented as exceedingly depraved and wicked.

Every man is declared to be a transgressor, and the root of this depravity is placed in the heart. Many of the gross crimes to which we all are inclined, and into the practice of which many fall, are enumerated ; and where these are avoided and concealed, the heart is described as deceitful and desperately wicked ; and that pride and hypocrisy which spread a false covering over the true character of man, are denounced, as among the things most hateful to God. Now, if this picture is not taken from the life ; if the



man as given in the Scriptures, correspond with universal experience, it will be an incontestable proof that the writers were guided by a strict regard to the facts of human nature. To enter into a discussion of this subject does not concern the object of this work; but for the truth of the description of man in Scripture, I would appeal to the experience of every man, and to every man's own observations. The description which the apostles give of the heathen world, is confirmed by all the historians and satirists of that period. And who needs a proof, that men have generally been wicked? Every civil institution, every expensive provision of civil government, to set up barriers against the violence and licentiousness of man. Indeed

must be unknown ; but it is manifest to those who are conversant with the sacred volume, or who are in the habit of hearing it expounded. Why should this book, above all others, have the power of penetrating, and as it were, searching the inmost recesses of the soul, and showing to a man the multitude and enormity of the evils of his heart and life? This may by some be attributed to early education, but I believe that if the experiment could be fairly tried, it would be found, that men who had never been brought up with any sentiments of reverence for the Bible, would experience its power over the conscience. The very best cure, therefore, for infidelity, would be the serious perusal of the Holy Scriptures. "The entrance of thy word giveth light. The law of the Lord, is perfect, converting the soul."

3. It deserves our special attention, in considering the internal evidences of Christianity, that the Scriptures contain explicit information on those points on which man stands most in need of instruction. These may be reduced to three: first, the doctrine of a future state of retribution ; secondly, the assurance that sin may be pardoned, and the method by which this can consistently be done ; and thirdly, the means for restoring the depraved nature of man to a state of rectitude. We are not capable of determining in particular, as we have before shown, what a revelation should contain, but it is reasonable to think, that if God gives a revelation it will contain some instruction on these important points.

And when we examine what the Scriptures teach on these subjects, it is found that the doctrine is *worthy of God, and so adapted to the necessities of*

interesting and momentous truths for the world to come, are presently calculated to make a deep and lasting impression on the mind. It is revealed that there will be a general judgment of all men; and that there is appointed a day when this event will take place. It is moreover taught in the New Testament that not only will every man be judged according to his works, but of every individual, whether it be the just or the unjust, will be brought under review; and that the destiny of all men will be fixed, according to the decision of this impartial trial. Those who are committed to everlasting life, in the Kingdom of God, others shall go away into everlasting punishment, that place, "prepared for the devil and his angels."

Another interesting fact revealed in the New Testament, is, that there will be a resurrection of the bodies of all men previous to the final judgment. This fact is revealed in the following passages:

and animating, as we may learn from the beautiful and striking description of the resurrection given by Paul, "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body;—For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

It is worthy of remark, that although the Scriptures express the joys of heaven, and the miseries of hell, by the strongest figures, they do not enter much into detail respecting the condition of men in the future world. There is true wisdom in this silence; because it is a subject of which we are at present incapable of forming any distinct conceptions. Paul, after being caught up "to paradise and to the third heaven," gave no account of what he saw and heard when he returned. How different is this from the ridiculous description of the seven heavens by Mohammed; and from the reveries of Emmanuel Swedenborg! The account of a future state, contained in the New Testament, is just that which is best suited to our imperfect mode of conceiving, and at the same time adapted to make the deepest impression on the minds of men.

The method of obtaining the pardon of sin, which is made known in the Scriptures, is so extraordinary and yet so perfectly calculated to reconcile the forgiveness of the sinner, with the justice and holiness of God, that it seems very improbable that it is a mere human device. The mission from heaven of a person called the Son of God: his miraculous assumption of human nature; his holy and benevolent character; and his laying down his life as an expiation for the sins of men, are indeed wonderful events, but on that ac



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sins, and their love to the Saviour. Ungodly men may pervert this doctrine, and turn the grace of God into licentiousness, but this has no encouragement from the principles of the Gospel ; it is merely the effect of the perverseness of sinful men.

This leads me to speak of the third thing which was mentioned as important to be known by man, which is the means by which a depraved nature may be restored to rectitude ; or in other words, how the thorough reformation of a sinner may be effected. On this subject philosophy has never been able to shed any light. And this is not wonderful ; for the most that human wisdom, if ever so perfect, could effect, would be the direction and regulation of the natural principles and passions of men ; but, in this way no true reformation can be produced. Whatever changes are effected, will be only from one species of sin to another. In order to a radical restoration of the soul to moral rectitude, or to any degree of it, there is a necessity for the introduction of it into the mind, of some new and powerful principle of action, sufficient to counteract or expel the principles of sin. It is in vain that men talk of a restoration to virtue by reason ; the mere perception of the right way will answer no purpose, unless there is some inclination to pursue it. Now the want of virtuous affections, or, to speak more correctly, of holy dispositions, is the great defect of our nature, in which our depravity radically consists ; and the only way by which man can be led to love and pursue the course of obedience to the law of God, is, by having love to God and to holiness excited or implanted in his soul. But *to effect this, is not in the power of any creature ; it is a work which requires a divine energy—a creating power, and therefore a true conversion from the*

or ambition ; but in every such case, effected by one active principle becomes as to counteract or suppress another. I lay down as a universal maxim, that all characters are brought about by exciting, in strengthening, active principles sufficient to those which before governed the man.

Now, let us inquire what plan of reformation is proposed in the Scriptures. It is such as precisely accords with the principles laid down, and the necessity of regeneration by the power of the Holy Spirit, taught almost in every variety of form, in the Old and New Testament. The effect of the new energy in the soul is, *a new heart* ; or, new power of moral action, the leading exercises of which are love to God, and love to man. Let a complete survey be taken of the nature of man with respect to his complete system of perceptions, passions, and

required for his lever to raise the earth, the principle necessary for a sinner's reformation is one which reason and philosophy cannot furnish.

The Bible is the only book which ever taught the true method of purifying the soul from sin. A thousand ineffectual devices have been tried by philosophers and devotees of other systems. One of the most common has been, to endeavour to extricate the soul from the influence of the body, by various methods of mortification, and purgation ; but all these plans have adopted the false principle, that the body is the chief seat of depravity, and therefore they have ever proved unsuccessful. The disease lies deeper, and is further removed from the reach of their remedies than they suppose. It is the Gospel which teaches the true philosophy respecting the seat of sin and its cure. Out of the heart proceed all evils, according to the Bible. And if we would make the fruit good, we must first make the tree good.

This necessity of divine agency to make men truly virtuous does not, however, supersede the use of means, or exclude the operation of rational motives. When a new principle is introduced into a rational soul, in the exercise of this principle, the soul is governed by the same general laws of understanding and choice as before. The principle of piety is pre-eminently a rational principle, in its operation. God is loved because he is now viewed to be a most excellent and amiable being. Heaven is preferred to earth, because it is seen to be a far better and more enduring inheritance ; and so of all other exercises.

I am naturally led from the consideration of this subject to speak of the moral system of the New Testament. I confine my remarks here to the New Testament, not because it teaches a different rule of





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moral duties, which can be conceived as obligatory on man, are here reduced to two grand principles, *the love of God*, and *the love of man*. The measure of the first is, the full extent of our capacity; of the second, the love which we have for ourselves. "On these two," says Christ, "hang all the law and the prophets." The duties which relate to temperance and self-government do not need any additional principle. If the soul be filled with love to God, and with love to man, self-love will be so regulated and directed, as to answer every purpose in moving us to perform what has been called our duty to ourselves. :

2. The precepts of morality in the New Testament, although sometimes expressed in comprehensive language, are often applied to the actual relations and various conditions of men. We are not left to infer particular duties from general principles, but the duties of individuals according to their circumstances are distinctly enjoined. Parents and children, husbands and wives, magistrates and subjects, ministers and people, the rich and the poor, the friend and the stranger, have all their respective duties clearly marked out.

3. Moral duties which have been overlooked, or misunderstood by other teachers, are here prominently exhibited, and solemnly inculcated. The virtues of humility, meekness, forbearance, and the forgiveness of injuries, were not acknowledged by the Heathen moralists; but in the New Testament they are made to assume their proper place, and much of true goodness is made to consist in their exercise. At the time of the advent of Christ, many false principles of morality had gained currency. The duty of *loving all men* had been circumscribed within narrow limits. Men charged with heresy, as the Sa-



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sake. This is the general rule of duty on this difficult subject, than which none can be wiser; but it must not be considered as inculcating passive obedience and non-resistance in all cases. Yet as long as a government has authority, so long we are bound to obey. Christianity is so constituted as not to interfere with any civil institution. It takes men as it finds them, in all the relations of life, and teaches them their duty. It never can, therefore, be the cause of sedition and opposition to existing governments. It considers all civil rulers, as the ministers of God, for the peace and good order of society, and for the punishment of those that do evil. It is made the duty of Christians, therefore, to be "subject unto the higher powers, and not to resist the ordinance of God.—To render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour."\* But when they who have the right to change the government of a country, exercise it, and put down one set of rulers, and set up another, the principle of Christian duty remains the same. And if in any country, Christians form the majority of the nation, there is no reason why they may not exercise this right of new modelling their government, or changing their rulers as well as others.

4. The moral system of the New Testament traces all virtue to the heart, and sets no value on the most splendid and costly offerings, or the most punctilious discharge of religious duties when the motives are not pure. The first inclination of the mind to an illicit object is denounced to be a violation of the law, and words of reproach, and all idle words, are among

\* Rom. xiii.

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Jesus Christ continually turned the attention of his hearers from earthly to heavenly things, as alone worthy of their affections and pursuit. Although he flattered no class of men, his attention was particularly directed to the poor; their spiritual necessities and their bodily afflictions excited his most tender compassion, and to them he addressed many kind and encouraging declarations. But his healing power was exerted in behalf of all applicants, rich and poor, and without regard to their sect or nation. Jews, Samaritans, Heathen, publicans, and sinners were the objects of his compassion. He was not deterred by the proud prejudices of the Scribes and Pharisees from associating with penitents, however vile and infamous they had before been. He graciously received returning sinners, comforted them with the assurance of pardon, and permitted them to manifest their grateful affection to his person by the most expressive signs and actions.

He manifested the kindest sympathy with his friends in their afflictions, weeping with those that wept, and often exerting his omnipotence in raising their dear relations from the bed of sickness or from death. And although he often uttered severe rebukes against the incorrigibly wicked, and was sometimes grieved and angry with them, yet his compassion towards them never failed; and even when their day of grace was ended, he wept over them with the most affecting tenderness.

Jesus Christ was often brought into conflict with insidious, malignant, and learned adversaries. They attacked him with deliberate craft, and proposed to him questions on delicate and difficult subjects, to which he was required to return an immediate answer; but in no case of this sort was he ever confounded

The parables of Christ are unparalleled in force, in the species of composition they belong. But this is the smallest parallelence. They contain so much import are so happily adapted to the subject and that often the persons intended to hear them, were constrained to give judgment on themselves. In these discourses, the truths of the Gospel are exhibited in a train of allegory which rivets the attention, and assists us in understanding the fulness and grace of the Gospel. They are also the rejection of the Jews and the call to the Gentiles; of the various reception of the Gospel by different classes of hearers; of the mixture of sound and unsound Christians of which the Church consists; of the cruel persecutions which the followers of Christ should endure, and of the triumph and destruction of his enemies.

tion, was a remarkable characteristic of Jesus of Nazareth. Whole nights he spent in prayer, and before day he would retire for the purposes of devotion. He was in the habit of praying and giving thanks on all occasions ; but his devotion was free from all tincture of superstition or enthusiasm. He taught, that not the words, but the heart ;—not the length of prayers, but their spirit was regarded.

His benevolence, meekness, and laborious diligence in promoting the welfare of men, were manifested every day of his life. But in his acts of mercy, and in his most extraordinary miracles, there was no appearance of parade or ostentation. *He went about doing good*, but he sought no glory from men. He was humble, retired, and contented with the lowest state of poverty.

When the people applauded him, he withdrew unto some other place. When they would have made him a king he escaped from their hands. When they asked curious questions, he directed them to something important. When they uttered unmeaning expressions of praise, he took occasion to announce some important truth, or deliver some interesting discourse.

In nothing did he discover more profound wisdom, than in declining to interfere in any case, with temporal concerns and disputes about earthly possessions. He showed by his conduct, what he solemnly declared on his trial, that *his kingdom was not of this world*.

In his intercourse with his disciples, we observe a sweet mixture of gentleness, of faithfulness and humble condescension to their weakness and their prejudices. No wonder that they should love such a Master. But his last discourses with them befo



xv, and xvi, chapters of the G.  
Indeed, it would be impossible  
courses in any language which c  
rison with this valedictory of Chri  
should enhance our admiration c  
lence of the Author, is, that he was  
sufferings were near, and would  
ignominious, and yet his attention  
case of his sorrowful disciples, a  
has relation to them. The insti  
CHARISTICAL SUPPER, intended to  
ive of his death, was attended w  
which exhibit the character of Je  
cular and interesting light. This  
understood by a perusal of the sin  
narrative of the Evangelists, to w  
referred.

The last thing in the character

before the Sanhedrim, and before Pilate, he maintained for the most part a dignified silence, uttering no reproaches or complaint; nor even speaking in his own defence. When particularly interrogated by the judges, he answered directly to the questions proposed, and avowed himself to be the Messiah, the Son of God, and the King of Israel. Under the mockery and insult which were heaped upon him he remained perfectly composed, and uttered not a word indicative of impatience or resentment. "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." When he was bewailed by the daughters of Jerusalem, as he ascended the hill of Calvary, bearing his cross, he requested them not to weep for him, but for themselves and their children, on account of the calamities that were coming on that devoted city. While suspended on the cross he saw his beloved mother among the spectators, and knowing that she would need a friend and protector, he recommended her to the care of the disciple whom he most tenderly loved. Although no compassion was mingled with the vindictive feelings with which he was persecuted, yet he set a glorious example of that most difficult duty of loving our enemies; as says the apostle Peter, "Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, replied not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Among his last words, was a prayer for those that were then engaged in crucifying him; *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.* "A penitent thief, who was crucified with him, loved his blessing and remembrance, when he

The moral excellence of the character is very remarkable for uniting in properties which among men are considered incompatible. He exhibited a complete independence of the possessious and glory of the world; a fervent and heavenly temper without the rigour of austerity; he combined uniform dignity and mildness; he manifested a firmness and intrepidity against all manner of sin and iniquity, but the most affectionate kindness towards every humble penitent; his spirit of elevated devotion with a life of incessant exertion. While he held his course with men of all classes, he adopted no partial judices and spared the vices of none. (To be continued) I will take the liberty of quoting a part of an excellent discourse of Dr. Channing already,—“ I will only observe that the author

dual in history; and yet this was blended with a condescension, loveliness, and unostentatious simplicity, which had never before been thought consistent with greatness. In like manner he united an utter superiority to the world, to its pleasures and ordinary interests, with suavity of manners and freedom from austerity. He joined to strong feeling and self-possession, an indignant sensibility to sin and compassion to the sinner; a calmness under opposition and ill success; a universal philanthropy, and a susceptibility of private attachments; the authority which became the Saviour of the world, and the tenderness and gratitude of a Son."

The salutary effects of Christianity on communities and individuals, open a wide field for important remarks; but it is a subject which we have not time to pursue; yet we must not pass it over in entire silence. The argument from this topic may, however, be reduced to a point. Take a survey of the whole world at this time, and let an impartial judgment be formed of the condition of all the nations, and let the question be answered, whether Christian nations are in a less favourable, or more favourable condition than others. And again, whether among Christians, those nations who have the free use of the Bible, and are carefully instructed in the doctrines of Christianity, are in a better, or worse condition, than those to whom the scriptures are interdicted, and who are permitted to remain in ignorance of the religion which they profess? The answer to these questions is so obvious, that I cannot but presume, that all readers will be of the same mind. It may then be asked, *would a vile imposture be the means of meliorating the condition of the world, and prove salutary in pro-*

Men who seemed to be sunk to a level  
beasts, have been reclaimed, enlightened, and  
to a participation of the blessings of civiliza-  
tion, their ferocious temper being completely soft-  
ened. Look at Greenland—at Africa—  
heite; and nearer home, at the Cherokees, (and  
other Indian tribes, and see what the Gospel  
can effect! I know not what infidels think of  
these things, but for my own part, I should not  
be surprised to hear a voice coming from the  
dead, or a voice of thunder from the  
heavens, so undoubted an evidence of the  
truth of the Gospel, as these effects. Will a series  
of persecutions produce such effects as these?

I know that it has been objected, that  
tyranny has been the cause of many bloody wars  
and persecutions; but this is impossible. The  
Gospel, which breathes nothing but benevolence  
and which requires its disciples not to resist  
freely to forgive their most malignant enem-

the most excellent things in the universe may be made the occasion of exciting, or calling it into exercise. Christ foretold that his religion would be an occasion of family discord ; and to express the certainty of the event predicted, he said, " Think not that I am come to send peace on earth ; I came not to send peace, but a sword ;" which some superficial readers have strangely misconstrued, as though he had signified, that it was the tendency of his religion to produce strife among friends. No man can remain in error on this subject who will take the pains to read the New Testament. And I will venture to predict, or rather to publish what is already predicted, that as soon as the world shall sincerely embrace the Christian religion, wars will cease to the end of the earth. Then shall men beat their swords into plough shares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and learn war no more.

But the salutary effects of the Gospel on those individuals who cordially embrace it, furnish the most manifest proof of its divinity. How often, by the the secret but powerful influence of the truths of the Bible, have the proud been humbled ; the impure rendered chaste ; the unjust, honest ; the cruel and revengeful, meek and forgiving ; the drunkard, temperate : the profane, reverent ; and the false swearer and liar, conscientious in declaring nothing but the truth ! Under the influence of what other system are such salutary changes effected ? Will it be said, that many who profess to experience such a change, prove themselves to be hypocrites ? Admitted ; but does this evince that they who give evidence of sincerity by the most incontestable proofs, all their lives, are also hypocrites ? All men wish to be thought, honest ; but if many are discovered to be knave

their ways. There are thousands who that they have experienced the salutary effect of the Bible, in turning them away from their former errors, and enkindling within them the love of God and of virtue. They cannot but believe that the religion which is from God, and are persuaded that no human device could so elevate and sanctify the mind as the Christian posture could so elevate and sanctify the soul that no human device could possess so much power over the conscience and the heart, as the Christian religion has experienced from the Scriptures. They are therefore, may truly be said to have the truth in themselves.

But there is an efficacy in the truths of the Gospel not only to guide and sanctify, but also to comfort and consolation to the afflicted in body or mind. The Gospel brings peace into every bosom where it is cordially received. When the conscience is freed from the stings of guilt and the soul is

meets death on the scaffold or on the gibbet, if its precious invitations to the chief of sinners be sincerely embraced. It mitigates the sorrows of the bereaved, and wipes away the bitter tears occasioned by the painful separation of affectionate friends and relatives. By the bright prospects which it opens, and the lively hopes which it inspires, the darkness of the tomb is illuminated; so that Christians are enabled in faith of the resurrection of the body, to commit the remains of their dearest friends to the secure sepulchre, in confident hope that after a short sleep they will awake to life everlasting.

The cottages of the poor are often blessed with the consolations of the Gospel, which is peculiarly adapted to the children of affliction and poverty. It was one of the signs of Jesus being the true Messiah, "that the poor had the Gospel preached unto them." Here it produces contentment, resignation, mutual kindness, and the longing after immortality. The aged and infirm, who by the gradual failure of their faculties, or by disease and decrepitude, are shut out from the business and enjoyments of this world, may find in the word of God a fountain of consolation. They may, while imbued with its celestial spirit, look upon the world without the least regret for its loss, and may rejoice in the prospect before them with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. The Gospel can render tolerable even the yoke of slavery, and the chains of the oppressor. How often is the pious slave, through the blessed influence of the word of God, a thousand times happier than his lordly master! He cares not for the short deprivation of liberty: he knows and feels that he is "Christ's freeman," and believes "that all things work together for his good," and that "these light afflictions which



never feel the envenomed sting  
ten does it overspread the  
saint with serenity ! How often  
fill with celestial joy, the soul  
the earthly house of this tabernacle  
renders in many instances, the  
place of sweet repose. No terror  
—no anxious care corrodes them  
oppresses their heart. All is love  
assurance ;—all is joy and triumph

Now the question to be decided  
which is replete with such sublime  
of theology ;—which exhibits  
true character of man, without  
exaggeration ; and which possessing  
power of penetrating the heart  
ing the conscience ;—which grasps  
the very points, with which it is


men, who are portrayed according to truth, with such imperfections as experience teaches us, belong to the best men ;—which delineates the character of Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, with such a perfection of moral excellencies, by simply relating his words, actions, and sufferings, that nothing can be taken from it or added to it, without detracting from its worth ;—and finally, which contains the true sources of consolation for every species of human suffering, and comfort in death itself. I say, is it reasonable to believe that such a book is the production of vile impostors ; and especially of uneducated fishermen of Galilee ?

Would such men have fallen into no palpable blunders in theology or morality ? Could they have preserved so beautiful a harmony and consistency between all the parts ? Could they have exhibited such a character as that of Jesus Christ, and while they introduce him acting and speaking so often, and in circumstances so peculiar and difficult, never ascribe to him any error or weakness, in word or deed ? Would impostors have denounced all manner of falsehood and deceit, as is done in the New Testament ? Would they have insisted so much on holiness, even in the thoughts and purposes of the heart ? Could they have so perfectly adapted their forgery to the constitution of the human mind, and to the circumstances of men ? Is it probable that they would have possessed the wisdom to avoid all the prejudices of their nation, and all connexion with existing sects and civil institutions ? And finally, could they have provided so effectually for the consolation of the afflicted ? What man now upon earth could compose *even the discourses*, said by the Evangelists to have *been spoken by Christ* ?

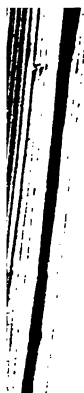
#### BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE

man can bring himself, after an impartial  
n of the Scriptures, to believe that they  
n by unprincipled impostors, then he may  
t an untutored savage might construct a  
line; that a child might have written the  
PARADISE LOST, or even that the starry  
was the work of mere creatures. No; it  
hat this is a forgery. No man or set of  
ad sufficient talents and knowledge, to  
a book as the Bible. It evidently tran-  
human effort. It has upon its face the  
divinity. It shines with a light, which,  
arness and its splendour shows itself to

It possesses the energy and penetra-  
ce, which bespeak the omnipotence and  
of its Author. It has the effect of en-  
elevating, purifying, directing, and com-  
those who cordially receive it. Surely  
THE WORD OF GOD, and we will hold



futurity; but be assured that for all these things God will bring you into judgment. But no; I will not believe that any who reflect on what has been said in these pages, will ever cherish a thought so diabolical. I will persuade myself, that a regard for the welfare of their country, if no higher motive, will induce them to respect the Christian Religion. And every pious heart will say, RATHER LET THE SUN BE DARKENED IN THE HEAVENS, THAN THE PRECIOUS LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL BE EXTINGUISHED.





## NOTES.

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### NOTE A.

MOHAMMED asserted, that while he was in his bed one night, the Angel Gabriel knocked at his door, and that when he went out, he saw him with seventy pair of expanded wings, whiter than snow, and clearer than crystal. The angel informed him that he had come to conduct him to heaven ; and directed him to mount an animal, which stood ready at the door, and which was between the nature of an ass and a mule. The name of this beast was Alborak, in colour whiter than milk, and swift as lightning. But when the prophet went to mount, the animal proved refractory, and he could not seat himself upon its back, until he promised it a place in Paradise.

The journey from Mecca to Jerusalem was performed in the twinkling of an eye. When he arrived at the latter place, the departed prophets and saints came forth to meet him, and saluted him. Here, he found a ladder of light, and tying Alborak to a rock, he followed Gabriel on the ladder, until they arrived at the first heaven, where admittance was readily granted by the porter, when he was told by Gabriel, that the person, who accompanied him was Mohammed, the prophet of God. Here, he met an old decrepit man, who it seems was no other than our father Adam ; and who greatly rejoiced at having so distinguished a son. He saw also innumerable angels, in the shapes of birds, beasts, and men. This

proceeded to the third, which was made of stones, where he met Abraham. The fourth was of emerald where he met Joseph, and Jacob. In the fifth, which was of adamant, he met Moses. In the sixth which was of carbuncle, he met John the Baptist. In the seventh which was of divine light, he saw Jesus Christ, and offered himself to his prayers. All the persons who were before, however, begged an interest in him. Here Gabriel informed him, that he could not stay there, and he proceeded alone, through the river of water, until he came near the throne of God. There he heard a voice saying, "O Mohammed, thou art the Creator!" He was not permitted to come near the throne of the Almighty, on the right side of which was inscribed this sentence, THERE IS NO GOD, AND MOHAMMED IS HIS PROPHET, which is the fundamental article of the Mohammedan religion.

whenever a name is blotted the person immediately dies. He speaks also of another angel, in the sixth heaven, which had seventy thousand heads, and as many tongues.

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NOTE B.

The Abbé Paris was the oldest son of a counselor of Paris, but being much inclined to a life of devotion, he relinquished his patrimony to his younger brother, and retired to an obscure part of Paris, where he spent his life in severe penance, and in charitable exertions for the relief of the distressed poor. He was buried in the ground of the church of St. Medard, near the wall, where his brother erected a tomb-stone over the grave. To this spot many poor people, who knew his manner of life, came to perform their devotions, as much, probably, out of a feeling of gratitude, as any thing else. Some among the devotees, who attended at this place, professed that they experienced a salutary change in their ailments. This being noised abroad, as the Abbé had been a zealous Jansenist, all who were of this party encouraged the idea of miracles having been performed, and multitudes who were disposed, were induced to go to the tomb of the saint; and some, as they confessed before a competent tribunal, were persuaded to feign diseases which they never had. It is a fact, however, that a greater part received no benefit, and that more diseases were produced than were cured; for, soon, many of the worshippers were seized with convulsions from which proceeded the sect of Convulsion-



persons in their  
selves to discredit the whole.  
bishop of Paris had a judicial inves-  
number of the most remarkable cases  
which were various, and often ludicrous.  
woman, said to have been cured of  
blindness and lameness, was proved  
neither blind nor lame. A man who  
was relieved, but it appeared that the  
powerful medicine, and that after  
not entirely healed. A certain A.  
misfortune to have one of his legs  
other, was persuaded that he experienced  
elongation of the defective limb, but  
no increase could be discovered.  
same situation, danced on the same  
an elongation of a defective limb,  
that she received benefit; but it  
should have to dance there.



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